NEA Today

WASHINGTON, D.C. DECEMBER 1995

A NEWSPAPER FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION AS

Best School In the Nation?

Michigan's Huntington Woods Elementary

see page 4

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Redeeming Our City Schools

Too many children in urban America today dream the dreams of children, but when they awaken, they awaken to a living nightmare of destitution and despair. Too many children go off in the morning to schools unprepared for them.

Listen to the adults who love these children. They're saying—we fear for our future and our children's future. Our children need help. They need it today. If public educators don't build bridges to these families and communities, if we don't help redeem their public schools, they will give up on us. They will abandon public education.

That is why we look with such great hope to our colleagues in Columbus, Ohio, who are welding together one of the most exciting public school projects in urban America.

Next school year the Columbus Education Association, in partnership with school management, parents, community activists, business leaders, and Ohio State University's College of Education, will take over four schools with some of the lowest student test scores in the city and run them as Professional Development Academies. An analogy from the world of health care springs to mind here—teaching hospitals.

A two-fold purpose inspires this bold undertaking in Columbus: transform these schools—one high school, one middle school, and two elementary schools—into vital centers of learning *and* enhance the skills of teachers who are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of urban children.

NEA President
Keith Geiger

We in the public education community have braved cynics and extremists alike to keep alive the democratic *ideal* that public schools should provide every child, regardless of class or race, with a first-rate education. Now's the time for us to move beyond good intentions into *reality*.

Members of our Association—teachers and support staff—have performed miracles under difficult conditions in urban schools. But as inspiring as these individual heroic deeds have been, they haven't led to enduring victories for schools and communities.

The next step for us as an organization is a huge one that will take us outside our traditional domain of a trade union and professional association. We must become partners in community change with school system managers and principals, parents and citizen activists, businesses and other labor unions, and colleges of education.

We cannot return to the one-room schoolhouses that communities literally built with their bare hands and sweat. But we can begin to reinvigorate our communities by making our public schools truly community schools

If the positive forces for change within a community lay aside their petty differences and private agendas, put kids first, and work together on a common agenda, we can transform failing public schools. Thomas Jefferson was right: when schools are the center of the community, we have better schools and better communities.

In Columbus several years ago, for example, our colleagues helped transform Douglas Elementary School into a model of an inner-city community school. With the help of the entire community, the school stays open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Douglas Elementary serves breakfast to kids whose parents must go to work early, and it provides a program for latchkey children after school. In the evening, community groups and adult educators use the school.

Douglas Elementary makes room for a parents' lounge, a faculty lounge, and a day care facility. One can't help wonder why every city public school isn't like Douglas—attuned to the social and economic realities of urban America.

Crime, violence, drugs, homelessness, economic despair, and race tensions. So many alarm bells are ringing these days, many citizens are tempted to stuff their ears with cotton. As public educators, we cannot. We must take courage as well as joy from our common life, and work for those we love, America's children.

Our colleagues in Columbus and in cities such as Seattle and St. Petersburg are showing us the way. In their boldness, there's power and magic.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Medicaid Cuts: Who Cares?

If you're a school employee, you'd better care. Your state government may make up for federal Medicaid cuts with education dollars.

With all the clamor these days about cutting *federal* spending, it's easy to overlook the impact of federal cuts at the *state* level. NEA members—and anyone who cares about children—can't afford to make that mistake.

Why? One of every five dollars state governments spend now comes directly from Washington. Federal budget cutbacks will mean *state* cutbacks—and kids and schools will pay the price.

Members of Congress have already voted $4 billion in education cuts for the next federal fiscal year—cuts that at *NEA Today* press-time President Clinton had vowed to veto. Congress has also okayed a seven-year plan that will mean even more cuts for everything from child nutrition to college loans and Medicare.

Which of these cuts will most impact children? The heaviest hit on kids may actually end up coming from congressional plans to slash Medicaid—the largest component of federal aid to states—by $182 billion over the next seven years.

Medicaid currently provides health care services for low-income Americans, and funding for it comes from both the federal and state levels. For states, Medicaid is one very big ticket item. In 1994, for instance, Medicaid consumed one-quarter of the Tennessee state budget and one-third of New Hampshire's.

The cutbacks in Medicaid voted by Congress will place enormous pressure on states. By the year 2002, federal support to states for Medicaid will be down 30 percent, and that will force states to choose between cutting health services or cutting other state programs—which will mean cutting education, the biggest single line item in most state budgets.

Medicaid cuts would also directly impact America's children. More than 20 percent of the nation's kids—about 18 million in all—now rely on Medicaid for everything from immunizations and check-ups to wheelchairs and emergency care.

If states choose not to cover the shortfall in federal Medicaid support, as many as 4.4 million children could have their Medicaid health care coverage eliminated.

States could, of course, avoid both education *and* children's health care cuts by raising new revenues at the state level, but NEA members like Nevada's Pat BeDunnah consider that unlikely.

Jim Decker

Clark County, Nevada Association leader Pat BeDunnah fears her state would cover a Medicaid funding shortfall by slashing education money.

BeDunnah, the president of Clark County's Education Support Employees Association, fears that her state would cover the funding gap for Medicaid by taking money out of education.

"Nevada has an influx of residents who came here for the tax structure, and they're here for the cheapest ride they can get," BeDunnah notes. "There's *no support* for an enhanced education budget."

It's still not too late to make your voice heard in the federal budget battle. You can contact your members of Congress at 202-224-3121.

—*Dave Winans*

Peas or carrots? And your papers, please...

No one rails harder against federal bureaucracy than the leaders of the Congress elected last year. But those same leaders are about to impose upon America's schools a paperwork nightmare.

In late October, the House of Representatives passed a welfare "reform" bill that contains complex new provisions for school nutrition programs. They require, for starters, school districts to determine each child's citizenship or immigrant status and determine if a non-citizen's immigrant status makes him or her ineligible or partially eligible for school meals.

The provisions also require schools to determine if an immigrant child has a sponsor and, if so, to verify the income of the sponsor's family.

School staffers are then required, by the new provisions, to add that income figure to the income of the child's family to determine his or her eligibility.

"The people who wrote these rules never spent a whole day in a school," says Mary Kaplan, an NEA member who works at the Ann T. Lynch Elementary School in Clark County, Nevada. "We now have trouble getting proof that people even live in our zone."

At Lynch Elementary, 80 percent of the students now qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch.

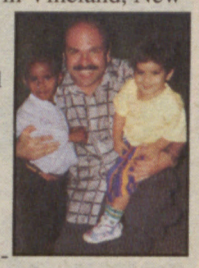
"There's no way we can comply with these rules and keep up with the daily work," Kaplan protests.

To meet the new federal regulations passed this fall, says Kaplan, district employees would need added training, facilities, and help—to tackle every chore from accessing immigration data and monitoring the kitchen to investigating households and verifying ever-changing incomes.

"What are we supposed to do, leave our jobs at school, search the streets, and ask people to present green cards?" Kaplan fumes. "Under these rules, more children will be discriminated against and denied a free lunch. What happened to our commitment to feeding children?"

Heroes & Zeroes

A halo to teacher Mark Melamed and his sixth graders at Memorial Intermediate School in Vineland, New Jersey for mending hearts and saving lives. They've raised thousands of dollars in the past few years to bring two two-year-olds from Tanzania to the United States for life-saving heart surgery. And hats off to the Deborah Hospital Foundation for picking up all the medical bills.



A Slander-'R'-Us Award to Concerned Women for America for its attempt to convince Americans that NEA members are pushing a "homosexual agenda" on America's schools. CWA packaged its distortions and smears into a full-page newspaper ad designed to raise money, of course. Some papers—like *USA Today*—refused to run it. Others—like the *Sacramento Bee* and *Seattle Times*—ran it and were sorry later. The *Bee* apologized to readers, saying it was a "mistake, pure and simple" to accept the inaccurate ad.

A Proud Professionalism Award to the nine teachers at Louisiana's Grambling Middle Magnet School who took a courageous stand in favor of high academic standards. The nine (members of a 10-person faculty) took a personal day this fall to protest the promotion of a 12-year-old student who failed a required language arts course. Some picketed; all sent a powerful message.

A Greedy Pig Award to the paper industry, which has been raising its rates faster than it can count its money. Industry profits have soared—one company's profits have jumped 300 percent in the last quarter alone. Some newspapers and magazines have stopped publication. Others—including *NEA Today*—will be a bit thinner in the months to come. SNORT.

Can a whole baseball team make the Hall of Fame? If so, let the Dodgers in for their terrific "Hometown Heroes" program. Each week during the season, the team places an ad in the *Los Angeles Times* saluting a local teacher and ball player who are making a difference in the community. As icing on the cake, Sanyo gives each of the teachers a VCR.

COVER STORY

This School Has EVERYTHING!

Photographs by Rex Larsen

Teacher Anne Schatz, third from left, eats lunch with students—right in the classroom. Parents like Diane Bartrand, left, feel free to drop in anytime.

In the ordinary town of Wyoming, Michigan, there's an elementary school that's extraordinary, perhaps the best in the nation. Take a look at Huntington Woods.

■ Teaching and learning with a difference.

Huntington Woods is a school without regular report cards. Instead students review their portfolios at family conferences. This is a school with just one textbook: *Chicago Math.* Teachers generate their own materials and use hands-on exercises to teach subject matter.

This is a school without rows or fixed grade distinctions. Here, all children work as teams at round tables, and upper elementary grade youngsters work routinely with their younger counterparts.

It's a relaxed (and, yes, fun) environment, but the work gets done—and *redone* if the student and teacher agree it isn't "quality" stuff.

What kind of results does Huntington Woods Elementary School produce?

"The biggest thing I'd say is that students have learned self-evaluation, how to do quality work," says teacher Andrea van der Laan (shown on cover). "As a result, we now have many students working above grade level."

■ Team teaching.

Huntington Woods teachers work in teams of two and three—depending on class size—in adjoining classrooms without partitions. When one educator feels overwhelmed by a classroom situation, the other can take charge and offer relief.

"Working in teams is a way to avoid burnout," stresses principal Kaye Mentley. "When you work by yourself in the classroom, you feel trapped, isolated, and lonely."

Teachers at Huntington Woods—and throughout the Wyoming school district—use one afternoon a week for collaborative planning. During that planning time, students participate in special programs at district "enrichment centers" that are open until 6 p.m.

■ An extended school year.

This year's 210-day calendar begins on August 28 and ends July 19, with five one-week intersessions.

"I get bored in the summer if I get too much time off," says fifth grader Andrea Klaver.

Teachers say that, with the extended schedule, students like Klaver need less refresher time at the start of the new school year.

■ Multi-age classes.

Huntington Woods students are grouped into Lower El (grades K-2) and Upper El (grades 3-5) "learning families." The advantages of multi-age classes: Older students help younger ones (and vice versa), new students are taught the ropes by older children, and teachers develop closer ties to parents.

"Younger students learn by osmosis by sitting next to older students," explains teacher Marilyn Prelgauskas.

"My fourth grader loves reading to my second grader and helping her with her math," adds parent Darlene Bentz, the mother of two Huntington Woods students. "I enjoy watching him take on that responsibility."

■ An equal voice for education support personnel.

Huntington Woods taps the talents of all staffers at the school. "I observe, solve problems, work programs, and even play chess with the students," says head custodian Don Hudson. "There's never a dividing line between me and the teachers. They involve me quite a bit and even invite me to their meetings."

The students get an added bonus. A budding computer programmer, Hudson volunteers to work with them in the computer room during part of his lunch and afternoon break.

Name of school:
Huntington Woods Elementary School

Number of students:
296

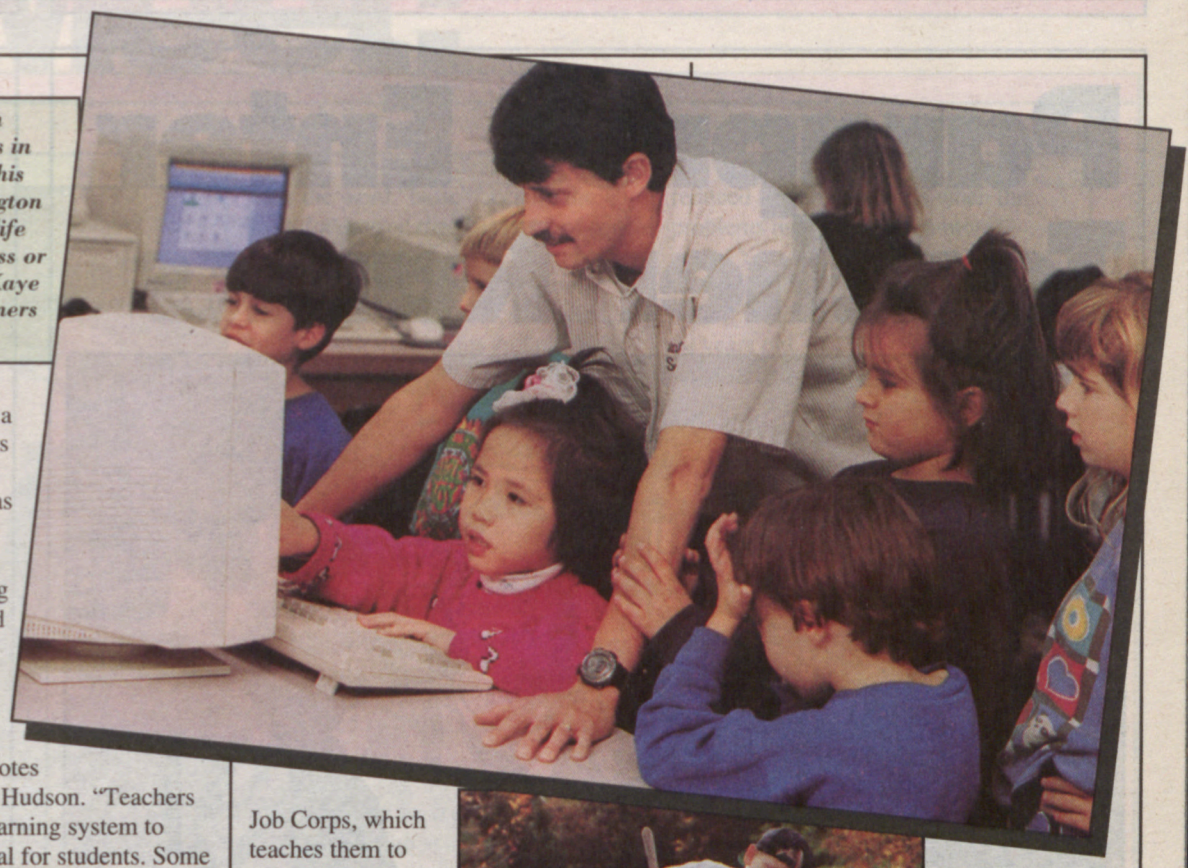
Number of teachers:
13

Community:
Blue-collar suburb of Grand Rapids.

Date of birth:
Reopened in 1993 through a renovation bond issue and a Michigan state grant for schools on an extended-year plan.

Philosophy:
A public school of "choice," open to every family in the Wyoming school district (transportation provided). Huntington Woods staffers base many of their educational decisions on the work of William Glasser, author of *The Quality School: Managing Students Without Coercion.*

COVER STORY



Right: Head custodian Don Hudson works with students in the computer room during his break. Below right: Huntington Woods students learn real-life skills, like running a business or planting a tree. Principal Kaye Mentley lends young gardeners a hand.

A full partnership with parents.

Parents, students, and staffers are united in the Huntington Woods Family Council, which has 11 "action teams" working on everything from fine arts to physical education. Parents visit the building all day long, are free to watch classes, and volunteer for many chores, including tutoring and clerical work.

"The hardest thing is keeping all these parents busy!" says teacher Anne Schatz.

Parent Darlene Bentz volunteers 10-20 hours a week, often performing clerical tasks in support of teachers.

"They let the volunteers know how important we are," she beams. "You're always welcome in the classroom to watch as just another adult, part of the teaching process. It's a pretty awesome place."

A principal who's a coach.

Kaye Mentley's an administrator who answers her own phone and acts more as an in-school consultant—to employees and students alike—than a boss.

When a staffer's having one of those days, the principal keeps a respectful distance. The teachers, who monitor each other's progress and self-evaluate at the end of each day, can be their own toughest critics.

"My job is to protect staff from what I call grunt work," Mentley declares. "I look hard to find volunteers and paid support for teachers—so that the bulk of their time can be spent on lesson design and planning."

A phone in every classroom!

Thanks to aggressive grant-hunting, the Huntington Woods school has a phone, a VCR, and computers in each classroom. The building also has a computer lab with desktop publishing capability—allowing students to write and produce their own books.

"Classroom computers are on a distributed network," notes head custodian Don Hudson. "Teachers use the integrated learning system to individualize material for students. Some of our kids are now doing eighth-to-eleventh grade work."

Breaking bread with the students.

In this school, teachers and students share their lunch break—right in the classroom.

"Teachers sit and talk to us at lunchtime, just like a friend," says student Jenifer Kim.

Afterward, under an agreement negotiated with the Wyoming Education Association, teachers enjoy a 30-minute duty-free break—while students enjoy up to 10 "choice time" activities supervised by parent volunteers.

The benefits of this lunch arrangement: students don't have to shout to talk, and lunchroom-related misconduct—the source of trouble in many schools—is avoided.

Taking on responsibility—big time.

After lunch, students wipe down their own tables. Cleaning up is a responsibility they learn in the school's Job Corps, which teaches them to sweep, mop, dust, empty trash, and even restock toilet paper.

On a broader scale, Huntington Woods teaches real-life skills through student-run enterprises—everything from a school bank and post office to a school newspaper and flower and vegetable garden.

Working together to pay the bills.

You need commitment—read, willingness to pay—to run schools like Huntington Woods. That's why millage votes are so important. This year was no exception. To rally votes in favor of increased funding, the Wyoming Education Association, the Wyoming Educational Support Staff Association, administrators, and parents joined forces.

Six days before a district referendum, teams of Huntington Woods employees, parents, and students went on a "Millage Walk" through surrounding neighborhoods, urging residents to vote yes. It paid off. On October 10, the millage vote passed by a 2-1 margin.

As a result, district schools like Huntington Woods will be able to continue innovating for some time to come.

—Dave Winans

Teacher Larry DeYoung confers with a student.

QUESTIONS?

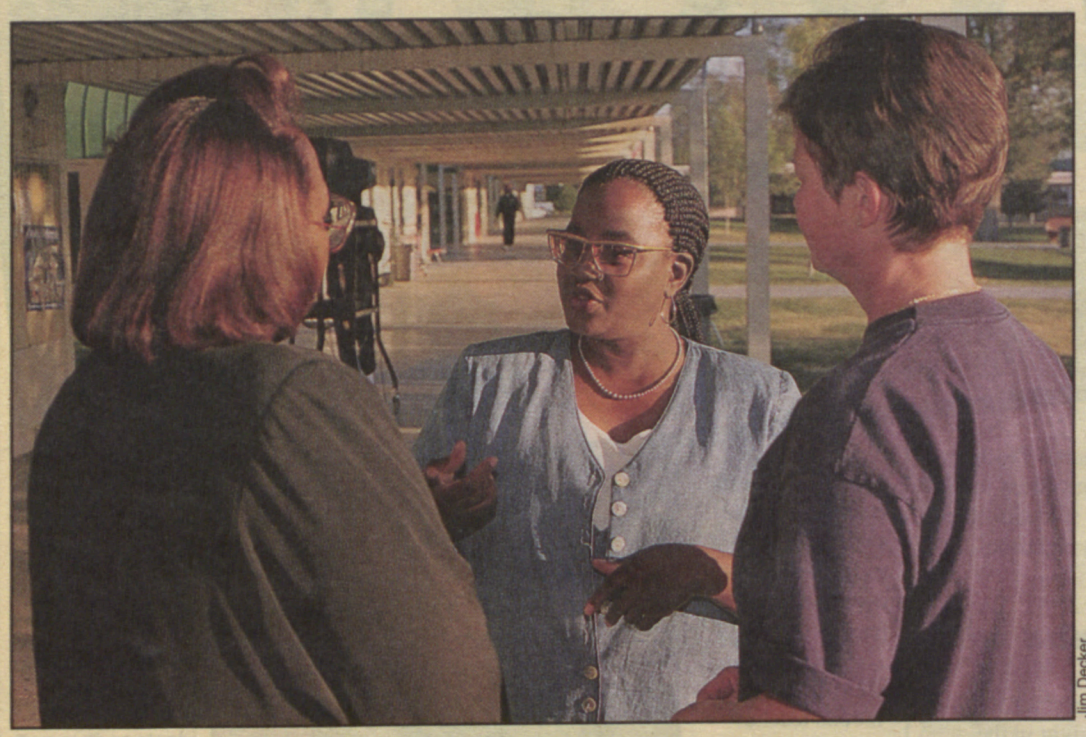
➤ Should a school be a place where students and teachers evaluate their own work—and where the principal is more of a leader than a boss? Can children change their own behavior by realizing why they make certain choices? And does student restitution for misconduct make more sense than detention? If you say yes, you've got common ground with the staff of Huntington Woods. For more on their education philosophy, read *The Quality School: Managing Students Without Coercion* (1992) and *The Quality School Teacher* (1993) by William Glasser (HarperCollins).

➤ Need more ideas on classroom innovation? Read these publications from the NEA Professional Library: *Multi-Age Classrooms* (2907-0-00-F), *Beyond Textbooks: Hands-On Learning* (2906-2-00-F), *Student Portfolios* (2901-1-00-F), and *School-Based Change* (2905-4-00-F). $9.95 each, plus s&h. To order, call 800/229-4200.

➤ Want to network with colleagues across the country on school change issues? Post a message on NEA Online's *Teaching and Learning Message Board.* Keyword: NEA Teaching.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Parapros Enter Teacher Ranks



Jim Decker

To boost the number of minority teachers, some districts recruit their support staff, then help them get the training they need.

For the past three years, NEA member Ethel Treadwell has spent her days as a teaching assistant at Savoy High School in Las Vegas and her nights studying to become a teacher.

Next fall, Treadwell's two "jobs" will end, as she closes the books on her studies and opens a new chapter in her life—this time as an elementary school teacher.

Once certified, Treadwell will become a hot commodity—as districts all over the country look to boost the number of minority teachers on their staffs. Like many other states, Nevada's minority student population is growing rapidly—and the number of minority teachers is not.

Over the years, the Nevada State Education Association has worked hard to make state legislators aware of the need to attract more minorities to the teaching profession.

They listened. A few years ago, legislators approved a $270,000 grant program to support innovative recruitment programs. Two-thirds of the money went to Clark County, the state's largest school district.

Once district officials received the funding, they turned to the Clark County Teachers Association for help. CCTA suggested that administrators look no further than the Clark County Education Support Employees Association for talented potential teachers.

The district agreed—and selected 30 paraprofessionals to participate in the program. The district helped arrange financial help and worked with local universities to develop more flexible class schedules, allowing ESEA members to complete their student teaching without taking unpaid leave.

The collaboration paid off. Today, most of the original 30 recruits are already in classrooms throughout the district. And the remaining few, including Treadwell, are in the final stretch, eager to move on.

"I'm really excited about moving into one of the Prime Six schools, which serves a predominantly African-American neighborhood," Treadwell says.

"I know I can make a difference by standing up in front of these students. They see me as an example of hard work and perseverance, and they see the door to education and teaching open to them, too.

"It was tough," she adds, "but well worth it. What better way to give to a community that really needs it?"

—Anita Merina

Paraprofessional Ethel Treadwell will bring a lot of experience dealing with students to her new career as a teacher.

Resources

➤ NEA's Student Program offers grants of up to $1,000 to student program chapters that come up with innovative ways to recruit non-traditional students or minorities into teaching. Contact the NEA Student Program, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

➤ Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. publishes *Careers in Teaching*, a listing of programs, scholarships, and job opportunities, and offers a counselor-assisted hotline for individuals of color and teacher candidates in some of the nation's largest cities. Call 800/969-TEACH.

➤ Many states offer forgivable scholarship and loan programs for paraprofessionals and minority teaching candidates. Contact your state education agency for more information.

➤ Don't forget NEA Online, the Association's electronic communications network. You can share job search strategies with Student Program members by tapping into the NEA Constituency message board or search other message boards for information about job openings.

WASHINGTON WATCH

Federal Block Grants: The Seamy Details

If Congress gets its way in the new budget, federal funding for several programs affecting children and schools—including Medicaid, child nutrition, and vocational education/job training—will be sent in lump sums to the states with few strings, fewer dollars, and potentially no guarantees of future funding or standards. These "block grants" will, if passed into law, force states to assume vast new program responsibilities. Facing an effective fund transfer date of October 1, 1995, state officials are now scrambling to assemble new (and costly) administrative machinery—including computer systems, program eligibility and quality standards, staff retraining, and accountability and appeals procedures.

What's the Real Agenda

Block grant proponents maintain this form of funding will return power to the states and eliminate federal waste and duplication of services. But they're not telling the full story: States will lose money in the process.

In block grants contained in Congress's proposed seven-year balanced budget plan, funding for Medicaid could be cut by as much as 30 percent, child nutrition by 20 percent, and voc ed/job training by 20 percent. Some block grant backers want to push the federal government out of the business of helping people.

What You Can Do

If you suspect your state may pounce on cut-rate block grants as an excuse to lower program standards (as well as your standard of living), there are steps you can take now:

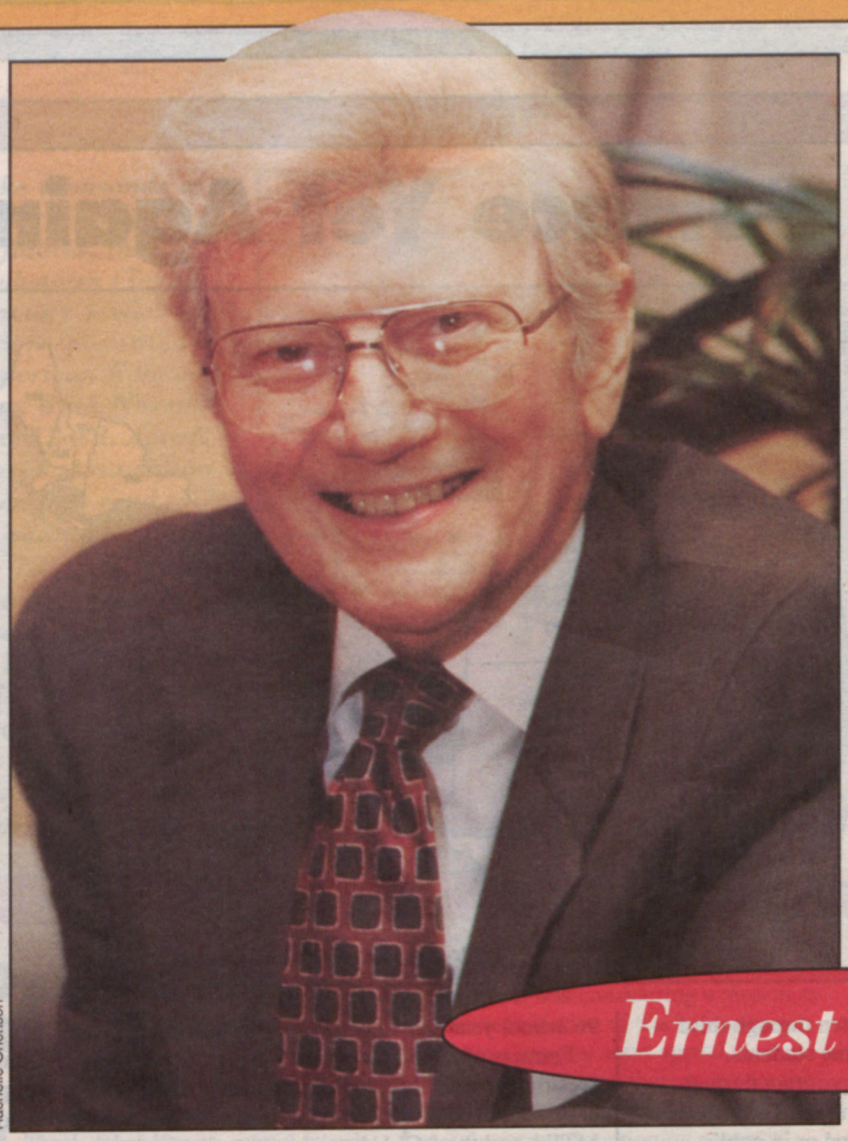
➤ Urge your members of Congress to include language in block grant legislation protecting children and education and giving educators and their organizations input into program standards—like eligibility and quality—and distribution of federal funds.

➤ Volunteer to help your NEA affiliate lobby for additional state resources to supplement federal barebones block grants and to preserve state funding for education.

Poli-tidbit

In 1980, Congress replaced 32 important education programs with $800 million in block grants to the states. Now, the Senate has proposed funding these programs with a mere $275 million, while the House bill would eliminate the block grants entirely.

Meet:



Rachelle Onenson

Ernest Boyer

Back to Basics

"I get most depressed when I hear experts talking to each other," says Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

"I get most renewed when I go into classrooms and hear children and teachers talking to one another."

Boyer has been a major player in the education policy arena for the past 25 years. His most recent book is **The Basic School.**

He spoke recently with **NEA Today** *staff writer Anita Merina at his office on the Princeton University campus.*

"The truth is," you write, "we know what works" in education.
Yes we do. We know that when class sizes are kept small and teaching schedules and student groupings are kept open this empowers teachers and promotes learning.

We know that a comprehensive curriculum relates to children's lives, is integrated thematically, promotes literacy, and teaches consensus values such as honesty, responsibility, and self-discipline.

We know that effective schools build an entire community around learning. This means including parents as partners and teachers and staff as leaders and integrating community services into the school setting.

We know all of this by looking at what good schools are already doing. There isn't any dazzling new experiment to try. We just need to support the outstanding practices that exist out there, and there are many.

Why does your newest book, *The Basic School*, focus on elementary schools?
So much of the reform movement focused on the outcomes of education, the upper grades, and national standards that I felt we were paying little attention to the foundations of learning. But investment in these early years will pay off most effectively.

After all, if we don't develop a public love of children and see the first 10 years of their lives as a precious time to teach them skills and enhance their quality of life, then we should worry about our own future.

Why call your book *The Basic School?*
I use the word "basic" because the book focuses on the first years of formal learning, emphasizes the importance of the neighborhood school, deals with language and curriculum, and identifies programs and practices already at work in schools.

In *The Basic School*, you push for "a curriculum with coherence." What do you mean by that?
There's great confusion in schools about what to teach. I want schools to organize curriculum around three goals: content, integration, and the relationship to students' lives. It's troubling to see students enter school asking "Why?" and by the third grade switching to "What's on the test?"

Why is school restructuring so hard at the high school level?
School renewal isn't impossible in the upper grades—just far more difficult. In the higher grades, children are less active, parents are less engaged, the schedule tends to be inflexible, and the curriculum more rigidly defined.

We also put curriculum into boxes where teachers must shift their attention from students to subjects, and where assessment tends to focus on knowledge of facts built around a discipline. As a consequence, the areas of learning are less integrated.

What remedy would you prescribe?
One thing I'd suggest is to break down the "super schools" of thousands of students into smaller, more manageable units. Super schools are more factories than schools, and the idea of intervention and reform becomes less and less productive the larger the school.

Every student needs to be part of a smaller school "family" where the student is always connected to a mentor/teacher. This breaks down the anonymity and makes learning far more meaningful. How can quality education take place in a building where students feel anonymous?

Are you worried about the future of school renewal in the event of massive federal budget cuts?
Absolutely. It's appalling that we've reduced funding at a time when the problems have never been more acute. You see broken test tubes in labs, kids sharing textbooks, and school buildings that are more than 50 years old.

We talk about urban renewal and yet children spend years in buildings that would have been bulldozed by any corporation I know. And then we expect children to walk into these crumbling buildings and be greeted with "Welcome to the world of learning"?

What appalls me even more is that rather than help correct this inequity, politicians would rather just label it a failed system and offer an alternative.

I wonder if all these "leaders" think about what such negative language does to children. They tell them to get out of bed each morning and march into a failed system, yet offer few solutions.

What if we were to say that about banking? Tell people it's a failed system, but, by the way, don't forget to put your money in it Monday morning. How can a 16-year-old get up each morning with that knowledge? It builds a cynicism that's unfair and demoralizing and just not true.

Those who favor vouchers often say they're backed by parents.
According to many polls, parental confidence in local public schools remains high. I also find it ironic that the same people who discount these polls then turn around and say, "Let's give school choice to parents." You can't have it both ways. You can't say parents aren't intelligent enough to know what's good yet they are intelligent enough to find what's better.

With all the talk about education reform in the past 10 years, why are so many schools still unaffected?
If there's been any failing in school leadership, it's that one program becomes all-consuming and others don't get the same balance of attention. The desire to have a model program isn't enough. We must focus on the local school.

How can we build a model system for all kids?
People have to realize that we already have a tremendous foundation for achieving quality education for all students—the endless dedication of the teachers and staff. These are the people who perform heroic acts every day despite working in crumbling buildings and with dwindling resources. Most school critics couldn't survive a week in the schools they condemn.

Grassroots

State

UTAH

With the lowest per pupil funding in the nation, Utah's schools can't afford massive federal budget cuts. To fight back, educators across the state have formed the Utah Education First Alliance.

"Nearly 1,000 kids will lose access to Head Start, 6,000 will lose remedial help, and 4,300 will be denied Pell grants," explains UEA staffer Susan Kuziak. "Who will help those kids?"

At press time, the Alliance—which includes the Utah Education Association, PTA, AFT-Utah, and associations of classified employees and elementary school principals—was taking its case to Utah's legislators and the public.

RHODE ISLAND

In a bitter legislative battle, NEA Rhode Island members have defeated Governor Lincoln Almond's recent attack on member pensions, but, in the process, had to swallow a 1 percent increase in state pension contributions.

"Almond ran on a platform touting change," says NEARI President Harvey Press, "but his sole innovation was his unjust and short-sighted attack on public employee pensions—exactly the kind of change we could have done without."

IDAHO

Increasing concern about school violence prompted the Idaho Education Association last year to appoint a task force to study juvenile justice issues. In the months since, the state legislature has created a new office to deal with the problem. And the governor has appointed IEA member Michael Johnson to head it.

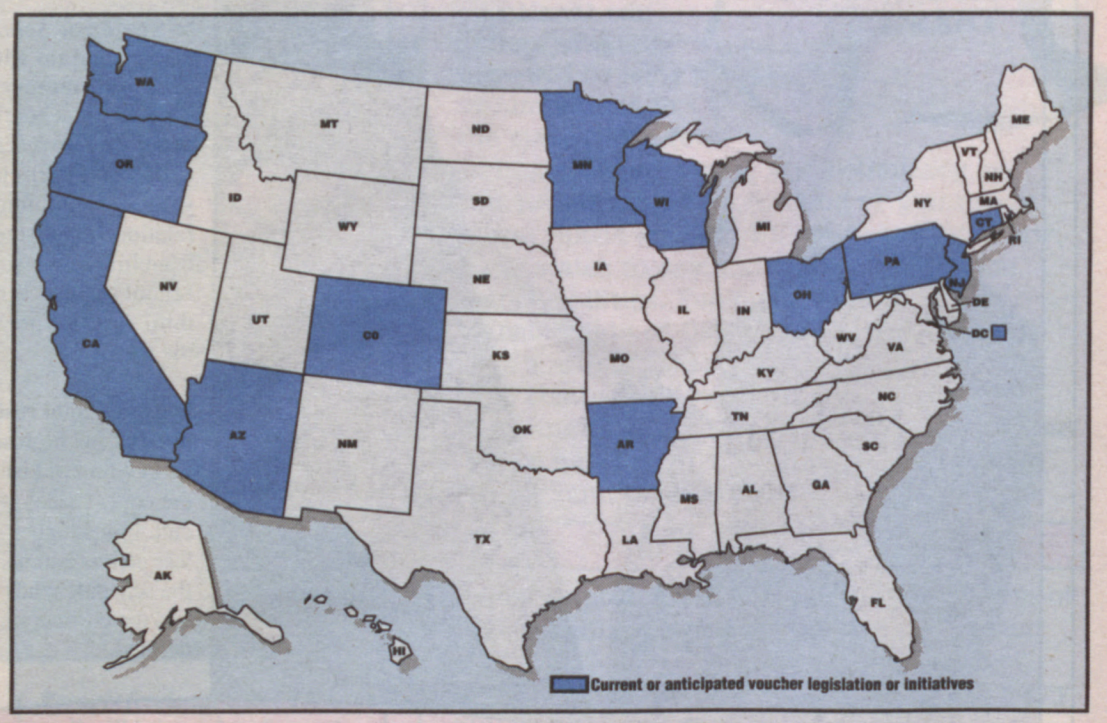
ARKANSAS

"Teacher-driven schools have long been a dream of our Association and its members," says Arkansas Education Association President Grainger Ledbetter. That's why AEA helped pass charter school legislation this year and is now looking to help its members launch several charter schools.

"There's a lot of excitement here," Ledbetter says, "coupled with a realistic understanding of the tremendous commitment involved."

PUBLIC FUNDS FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Vouchers Surface Yet Again



Predictable as crab grass, school voucher initiatives just keep sprouting across the country. This year's crop includes everything from governors' voucher proposals in Connecticut and Minnesota to signed-and-sealed legislation in Ohio and Wisconsin.

Among the worst developments:

➤In June, the Ohio legislature approved a $5.25 million state-funded voucher program for students in the Cleveland school district. The program provides $2,500 vouchers for children in kindergarten through third grade, with some preference for low-income students.

Voucher recipients can continue in the program through eighth grade, as long as funds are appropriated. The stipends may be used in private schools in Cleveland or in public schools in adjacent districts.

This program was supported by the governor, the mayor of Cleveland, and a number of minority legislators. A court challenge based on the violation of church-state separation is likely.

➤Such a suit has already been filed, by both the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA) and the American Civil Liberties Union, against Wisconsin's voucher law.

Folded into the state budget bill by Governor Tommy Thompson and conservative legislators, this provision expands the current Milwaukee voucher program to include religious schools. The statute also increases the number of low-income Milwaukee students eligible for vouchers from 1.5 percent of the district population to 7 percent in the 1995-96 school year and 15 percent in the following year.

Framers of the law attempted to leap over the church-state "restrictive wall" by providing voucher checks directly to parents—who could then endorse them over to religious schools. MTEA and the ACLU have won a temporary restraining order on implementation of the statute until the state Supreme Court rules on its constitutionality.

➤Association members in Washington state are gearing up to fight ballot Initiative 173, a more skillfully crafted voucher plan that would apply to private and public facilities, but not religious schools.

If passed, the initiative will go right to the state legislature for consideration in January.

The Washington Education Association has joined forces with another school union to create a site-based "voucher awareness program" for members. And, together with school administrators and the PTA, this coalition has developed a public outreach campaign with a common message.

IN ARIZONA

Temperature Rises

There's a heat wave in Arizona that's making some school employees sick and preventing others from taking on extra duties. Feeding the furnace is a four-year, $300 million cut in state school aid, plus Governor Fyfe Symington's failure to act on the need for a new capital funding formula.

School officials across the state are capitalizing on this crisis by citing budget shortfalls—both real and exaggerated—as a reason for cutting programs and imposing substandard pay increases and arbitrary work rules.

Arizona school employees who have won union contracts—in a state without a bargaining law—aren't used to such unilateral tactics and they're fighting back.

➤Since the Governing Board of the Tucson Unified School District voted in July to impose its own "policy"—contract—on teachers and support staff, members of the Tucson Education Association have staged rallies, addressed board members individually and collectively, and begun a community outreach campaign including planned home visits.

➤Members of the Phoenix Union High School District Classroom Teachers Association are picketing the administration building and "working to contract"—refusing extra duties like fundraising and participation on school improvement teams—to protest their governing board's August decision to unilaterally impose a contract. Among other things, the management dictum freezes pay steps and increases class sizes for special ed and ESL students.

In October, three-quarters of the Association's membership made the most striking statement of all. They returned unsigned individual teaching contracts to the district personnel office "as a statement of solidarity," reports local President Mary Ann Gwinn.

"Our people are tired, but they're still hanging together to win a negotiated agreement."

Ely Hogue

Like thousands of other NEA local affiliates, the Robstown (Texas) Faculty Association celebrated American Education Week November 12-18. Across Texas, Association members read to thousands of kids at 78 malls. This is the sixth year for the project.

Here, librarian Elizabeth Medrane reads to youngsters at the Waldenbooks outlet in Corpus Christi.

IN KANSAS

Defending Due Process

You get along or you *get along*. That's what Kansas school boards will be telling educators if the state legislature succeeds in scrapping teachers' due process rights. At press time, the legislature's Interim Committee on Education was considering a motion to make termination of teachers subject only to a lengthy court appeal.

Kansas NEA members won't let this happen without a fight. Under the state's current "continuing contract" law, a teacher with at least three years of experience may appeal the nonrenewal of his or her contract to a due process hearing officer—whose decision is binding and subject to limited court appeal.

"If we lose this battle now," says Kansas NEA President Barbara Cole, "school boards and administrators will be given license to fire at will—only subject to the possibility of a lengthy court battle that few teachers will be able to afford."

FOR KIDS' SAKE

State Spending on Children's Services per $100 Personal Income, 1992

REGION		EDUCATION SPENDING*	NON-EDUCATION SPENDING**
New England	Connecticut	4.31	0.41
	Maine	5.23	0.41
	Massachusetts	3.68	0.53
	New Hampshire	4.00	0.31
	Rhode Island	4.44	0.57
	Vermont	6.24	0.49
Mid Atlantic	Delaware	4.14	0.38
	Maryland	3.99	0.40
	New Jersey	5.02	0.32
	New York	4.78	0.82
	Pennsylvania	4.42	0.42
Great Lakes	Illinois	3.89	0.40
	Indiana	4.69	0.29
	Michigan	5.23	0.57
	Ohio	4.63	0.45
	Wisconsin	5.17	0.40
Plains	Iowa	4.94	0.31
	Kansas	4.46	0.29
	Minnesota	4.61	0.43
	Missouri	3.87	0.30
	Nebraska	4.81	0.29
	North Dakota	4.97	0.25
	South Dakota	4.50	0.21
Southeast	Alabama	3.86	0.17
	Arkansas	4.83	0.23
	Florida	3.65	0.34
	Georgia	4.11	0.34
	Kentucky	4.72	0.36
	Louisiana	4.99	0.33
	Mississippi	4.49	0.23
	North Carolina	4.11	0.30
	South Carolina	4.66	0.24
	Tennessee	3.50	0.32
	Virginia	3.96	0.24
	West Virginia	5.74	0.30
Southwest	Arizona	4.14	0.24
	New Mexico	5.29	0.32
	Oklahoma	4.58	0.35
	Texas	4.86	0.25
Rocky Mountain	Colorado	4.14	0.29
	Idaho	4.62	0.19
	Montana	6.01	0.29
	Utah	4.98	0.25
	Wyoming	6.52	0.27
Far West	Alaska	7.59	0.75
	California	3.73	0.71
	Hawaii	3.60	0.40
	Nevada	3.60	0.24
	Oregon	5.06	0.33
	Washington	4.21	0.47
United States		$4.36	$0.44

* Includes spending from federal sources for elementary/secondary education. In 1992, education revenues from the federal government represented, on average, 6.6 percent of total education revenues.

**Includes state spending matched by the federal government for the nine largest federal matching programs benefiting children. These nine programs are: AFDC, AFDC child care, Medicaid (the portion attributable to children), foster care, maternal and child health, child support, at-risk child care, adoption assistance, and child welfare.

Source: Steven D. Gold, et al., "How Funding of Programs for Children Varies Among the 50 States." Prepared for The Finance Project, May 1995, and calculations by The Finance Project.

Local

VERMONT

Negotiations were going nowhere when members of the Willison Education Support Personnel Association convened a community forum to talk turkey.

The Association invited school board representatives and publicized the event. When board members didn't show up, school employees went on anyway, speaking to a crowded room of parents, community leaders, and media.

The result: negotiations are back on track and moving forward.

ALABAMA

Association members in Troy City are on a health kick—leading and participating in a pilot wellness program paid for by the state's health insurance plan.

Coordinated by Association member Sherry Key, the wellness pilot includes nutrition counseling, exercise, and blood tests. "Teachers have incredibly stressful jobs," says Key. "It's time we helped them physically meet the challenges of this work."

NEVADA

When school board officials took the White Pine County schools to the brink of bankruptcy, members of the White Pine Association of Classroom Teachers and Support Staff didn't take it lying down.

"We walked the community, setting up recall stations and circulating petitions," says Association leader Mary Bullock. As a result, two board members were recalled and two more turned in their resignations. Recall petitions against 10 more county officials are now circulating.

MICHIGAN

After three years without a contract, the 822 members of the Warren Education Association began the 1995-96 school year with a fair contract, including retroactive pay increases, 3 percent annual increases, and two days of paid leave to make up for additional instructional time mandated by state law requiring 990 hours of elementary instruction.

What ended the stalemate? A new school board majority, courtesy of Association and community involvement in elections this past summer.

Educators inspire students.

Great ones inspire their colleagues as well.

Since 1988, The Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education has annually recognized outstanding educators who are making a difference today, and whose programs and ideas can serve as effective models for the education of future generations.

Each year, a distinguished Board of Judges presents up to three $25,000 awards to individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge through education.

We are proud to announce this year's winners: ***Ernest L. Boyer****, Ph.D, of Princeton, New Jersey, former U.S. Commissioner of Education and President of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching;* ***Mary Diez****, Ph.D, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dean of Education, Alverno College; and* ***Gene Bottoms****, Ed.D, of Atlanta, Georgia, Director of the Southern Regional Education Board's "High Schools That Work" program. Congratulations to three individuals whose dedication to scholarship should be an inspiration to us all.*

The 1995 **Harold W. McGraw, Jr.** *Prize in Education*

For more information, write: The Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education, The McGraw-Hill Companies, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, Room 2917, New York, NY 10020.

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Innovation

How NEA members are changing the way schools work

Photographs by Tom Emrich/Jay Photo

Left: Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders at Shelburne Community School are learning how to set their own learning goals and objectives.

Below: "This is not about us being the sole possessors of knowledge," says Alpha teacher Meghan O'Donnell.

Taking the Middle To Extremes

Shelburne, Vermont is a village steeped in quaint New England traditions. But those traditions stop at the middle school door.

When ninth grader John Dutton decided to pay a recent visit to his old classroom at Vermont's Shelburne Community School, he took Kevin, a high school pal who grew up in New York state, along for the ride.

Taking note of the old sofas, stuffed arm chairs, round tables, stools, covered mattresses, and an old washtub filled with pillows, Kevin was incredulous. "This was your classroom?" he asked. "How did you learn in here? There's no walls, man!"

Teachers Carol Smith, Meg Kenny, and Meghan O'Donnell are used to people's surprise when they enter the Alpha program—a multiage class of 75 kids in grades six through eight. They're used to the labels, too—"loose," "permissive," even "weird."

But given their students' success, they've learned to ignore it.

On one chilly morning in October, 12-year-old Maddy Feldman lay in the washtub reading *A Bone From a Dry Sea.* At a nearby table, Mike Whalley sat chewing his nails, impatiently waiting for classmate Logan Puck to finish his peer review of Mike's writing assignment.

Seventh grader Sephirah Feinberg sat at the same table adding and subtracting fractions in her math workbook, while across the way eighth grader Tom Little used the computer to create a Power Point presentation on the Ice Age.

There are no walls, no bells, no textbooks, and no letter grades at Alpha. Indeed the classroom looks more like a basement rec room than a place of learning. But there's plenty of serious learning going on here.

"This is not about us as teachers being the sole possessors of all the knowledge and imparting it to the kids," says Meghan O'Donnell.

"We let our students make mature decisions about what they want to learn and how they choose to get their work done," adds teacher Meg Kenny.

The three teachers started the school year with no set curriculum. Instead, they used questions students had about themselves and the world to create a list of themes for study throughout the year. The first theme is origins.

Alpha teachers expect the 12-to 14-year-olds to complete work—reading, writing, math, and individual and group projects—related to the theme. But the kids set their own goals for each week.

As 12-year-old Sephirah Feinberg explains, "We get to decide how best to get the work done. And you have a week to complete it. If you're a fast worker, you can do all your work at school. Or you can do some of the work at home if you need more time."

Teachers hold conferences with each student to track progress and help solve problems. They step in to offer guidance and advice—especially when cooperative learning isn't so cooperative.

But Alpha students assess their own progress in the areas of communication, social responsibility, personal development, problem solving, and independently functioning. And they take charge of portfolio conferences with parents.

Some wonder how this student-directed approach to learning compares with the often criticized open-school movement of the 1970s. But Carol Smith, a 25-year Shelburne teacher, Vermont Teacher of the Year, and one of the architects of the Alpha program, says there's no comparison.

"Teachers here understand what learning is and how kids learn. It may not be clear to the casual observer, but the program has a system and a structure underneath. We don't let kids fall through the cracks."

While Alpha may not be for everyone, most kids who choose to attend thrive.

"I don't learn very well if teachers just stand up in front and talk to me," says 12-year-old Sarah Lenes. "I can't hear it and remember it in my brain. I learn better in an open environment. I get to work on my own, and there's always help out there if I need it."

Many parents admit they had a hard time buying in to the Alpha philosophy at first. "Coming from a very structured learning environment, it was a tremendous leap of faith for me," says Steve Waltien, a member of Alpha's parent council. After a year, he was sold. He just enrolled his second child there.

Another Alpha parent, Terry Job, works as a substitute teacher at Champlain Valley Union High School where most Alpha students end up. Job says you can spot a former Alpha student a mile away.

"Alpha students are calmer, they know how to use their time, they interact more easily with adults," she says. "They seem to feel they have ownership in the whole process."

It's that kind of confidence that keeps former Alpha students like John Dutton ahead of the game.

"I learned so much in Alpha that's helping me in high school," Dutton says. "The things I learned about collaboration, communication, and creative thinking—that's what they want me to do in high school."

—Karen Gutloff

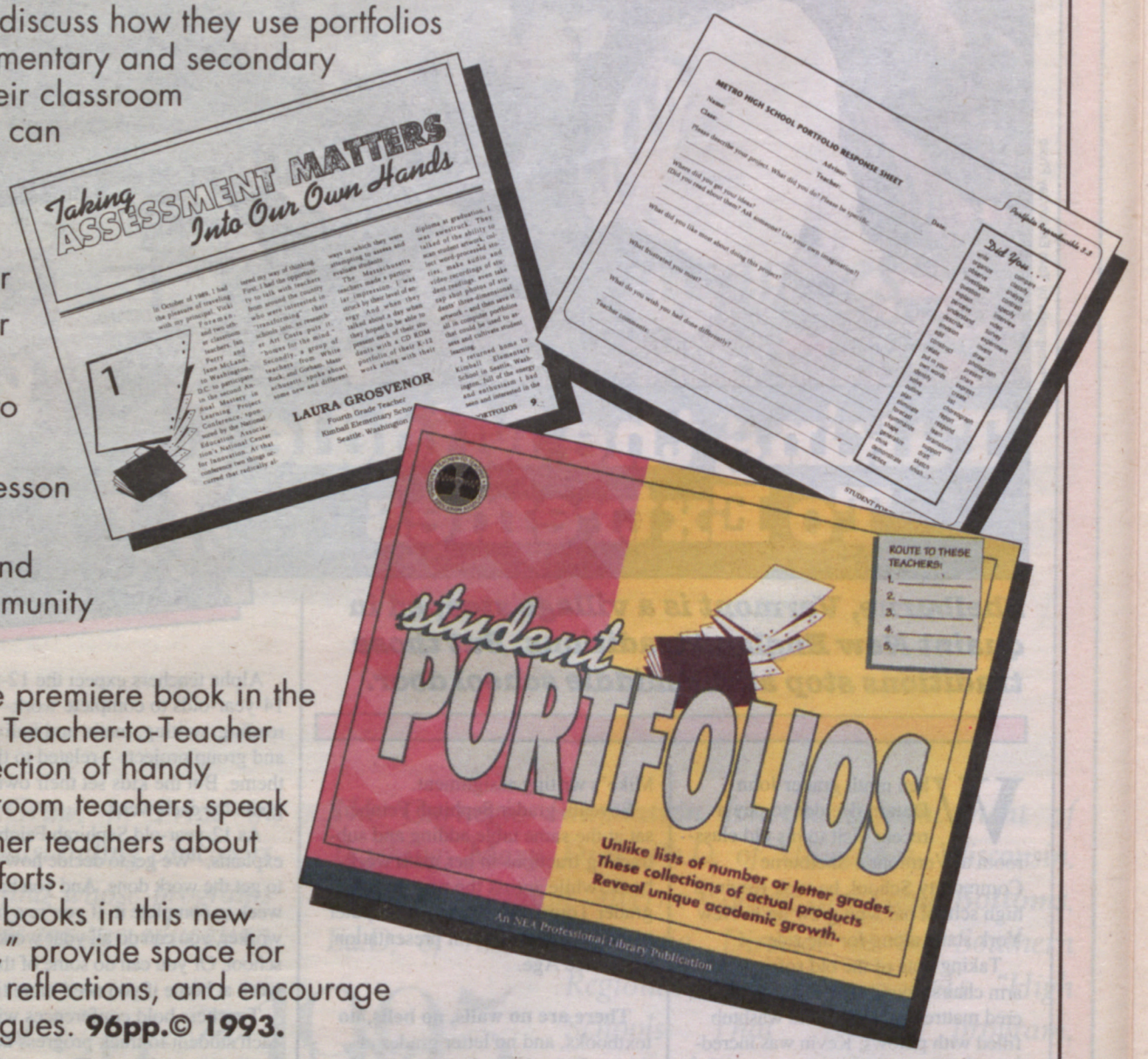
For more information, contact the Alpha team at Shelburne Community School, 802/985-3331.

Rich and Varied Insights From the Experts... CLASSROOM TEACHERS

student PORTFOLIOS

Eight innovative teachers discuss how they use portfolios to enhance learning in elementary and secondary classrooms. Learn from their classroom experiences how you, too, can use portfolios to:

- Collect and assess student work in a meaningful, hassle-free manner
- Help students assess their own progress
- Report student progress to parents
- Develop more effective lesson plans
- Build school credibility and accountability in the community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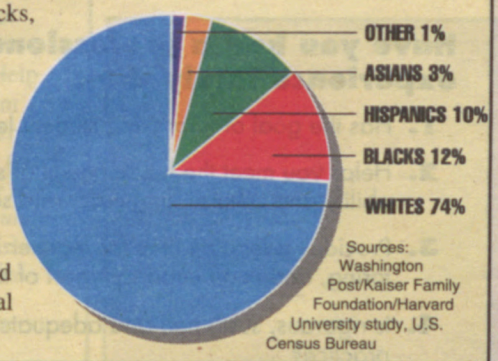
Trends

The Numbers Are All Wrong

Americans are way off in their perceptions of the country's racial make-up. A nationwide survey of whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians showed that each group estimated about 50 percent of the country is white. What percentage is Black? All groups answered around 23 percent. Hispanic? Whites, Blacks, and Asians said around 15.5 percent, Hispanics said 20.7 percent. What percentage is Asian? The groups said on average 10.5 percent. (For the real answers, see chart.)



Sources: Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University study, U.S. Census Bureau

Will They Ever Learn?

The privatization of the public schools in Hartford, Connecticut, hit a major bump this fall when the for-profit company Education Alternatives, Inc. presented the school board with a $5.5 million bill.

For what? It's not clear, since EAI hadn't even submitted a detailed management plan until late October—many months after the Hartford school board gave EAI a controversial contract to run city schools.

Meanwhile, in Dade County, Florida, EAI has lost the very first contract it had won to run a public school for profit. The Dade superintendent didn't renew EAI's contract at South Pointe Elementary. After five years, test scores at the school rose no more than scores in other schools in the district.

But some districts haven't learned their privatization lesson yet. In Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, another company, Alternative Public Schools, has been brought in to run Turner Elementary.

APS's first move: replacing long-time teachers with non-union teachers from outlying areas and tying teachers' pay to student performance.

Making the Grade

At first glance, public schools received a fairly harsh grade in the 1995 Phi Delta Kappa poll of the public's attitude toward public schools. Only 20 percent of the respondents gave the nation's public schools an *A* or *B*.

But 41 percent gave their *local* schools high marks—and 49 percent of public school parents gave their children's schools good grades.

"Lack of discipline" topped the charts as the biggest problem for public schools, as it has for 18 of the past 26 years. Next came fighting, gangs, and violence.

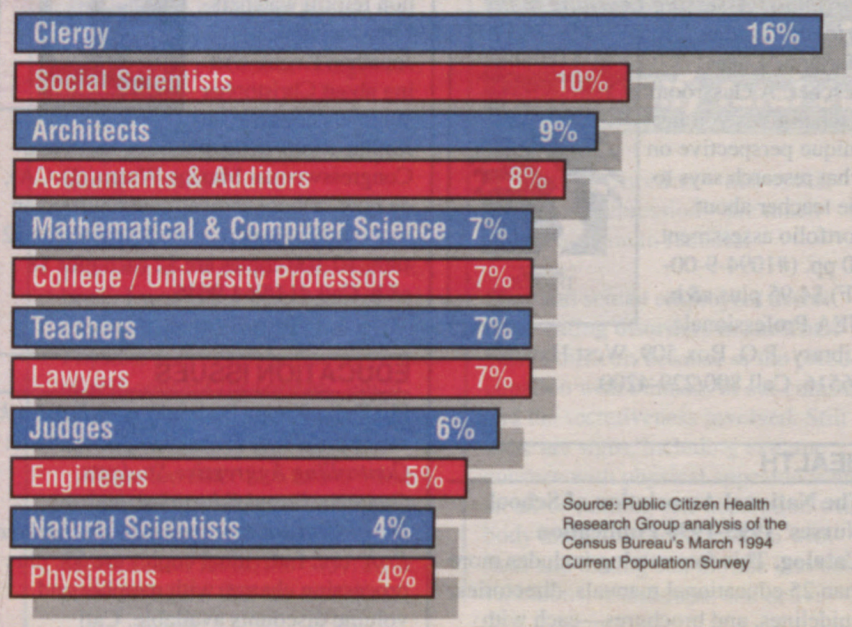
➤ Some two-thirds favored school choice among public schools; 65 percent opposed public funds for private schools.

➤ 66 percent opposed inclusion.

Every year teens, who wield some $93 billion of spending power, are blasted with 30,000 commercial messages—some of them in classroom materials corporations provide to cash-strapped schools. The Consumers Union has called for these materials be non-commercial and objective—unlike the Procter & Gamble kit that said clear-cut logging is good for the environment because "it mimics nature's way of getting rid of trees."

An Unhealthy Situation

Some 40 million Americans don't have health insurance—many of them people you see every day. The Public Citizen Health Research Group estimates that as employers continue searching for cost-cutting measures, the ranks of the uninsured will grow to 43 million by Election Day, 1996. Of course, no legislator goes uninsured. But many in other fields of work—even in the professions—aren't so lucky. Here's the percentage of people in professional fields who go uninsured.



Source: Public Citizen Health Research Group analysis of the Census Bureau's March 1994 Current Population Survey

➤ 75 percent favored a Constitutional amendment to permit spoken prayers in public schools.

➤ 67 percent opposed providing education, school lunches, and other benefits to children of illegal immigrants.

Still Love Those Apples

Where do schools fit in the electronic age?

The hope is that schools will be jamming onto the Superhighway. Schools are projected to spend billions on technology this year, and President Clinton announced this fall that he wants every classroom connected to the Internet by the year 2000.

But looking at the hardware, it seems many educators are still chugging on the side streets. More than a third of all computers in schools are Apple IIs—a line that was discontinued back in 1990.

In a recent QED poll, teachers agreed that the Internet and online services prepare students for the information age. But an overwhelming number cited lack of knowledge, time, and training as reasons that they haven't climbed on the Superhighway more themselves.

Dear Santa. . .

Or is it, "Hey, dude, here's what I want"?

A study of letters to Santa finds that boys and girls differ in the way they ask Santa for gifts. They both want the same number of things, but girls are more courteous and circuitous when they ask. Girls more often put their request in the context that Christmas is coming soon, for example, instead of going straight to the laundry list.

Girls also tend to write longer, more affectionate letters, and they're more expressive.

But girls and boys are equally altruistic in requesting presents for others. Researchers studied 344 letters gleaned from a big-city post office and published their findings in the Summer 1994 issue of *The Journal of Popular Culture*.

NFIE

What's Good Professional Development?

Take the 10-question quiz in the white box at right. If you answer "yes" to more than 5 of the questions, NEA wants to hear from you.

NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education has an ambitious agenda for the coming year.

"We want to transform teaching," explains NFIE Executive Director Judith Rényi, "by helping to create rewarding professional development programs in all schools."

To that end, NFIE is currently collecting data on good professional development programs and preparing a national report to be released next year.

"We want to know what kinds of on-the-job learning opportunities have helped NEA members the most in their teaching careers," Rényi explains.

"We're looking for all kinds of good experiences," she adds, "from book discussions at brown bag lunches, to formal courses, to summer institutes."

If you've had an outstanding professional learning experience, NFIE staffers want to hear from you.

➤ They want to know about the best professional learning experience you've had since becoming a teacher.

➤ What made the experience good?

➤ How did the new learning affect your teaching?

➤ How did it improve student learning?

Add your name and phone number, then mail your answers to Robert Ganem, NFIE, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, or fax it to him at 202/822-7779, or e-mail RGanem@nea.org.

The most interesting stories about how and what people have learned since becoming a teacher will be included in the national report.

NFIE will also ask some respondents to help design new grant programs to bring good professional development into the working lives of all teachers.

On a Mission

NFIE was created in 1969. Grant money—from NEA, as well as corporations, private foundations, and individuals—allows NFIE to offer educational employees resources for professional development and educational leadership.

TELL US ABOUT IT

Have you had a professional development experience lately that:

1. Has the goal of improving student learning?
2. Helps you meet the future needs of students of every learning ability and cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic background?
3. Provides adequate time for teacher inquiry, reflection, and mentoring, and is an important part of the normal working day?
4. Is rigorous, sustained and adequate to the long-term change of practice?
5. Is directed toward teachers' intellectual development and leadership?
6. Fosters a deepening of subject matter knowledge and a greater understanding of students' needs?
7. Is teacher designed and directed, incorporates the best principles of adult learning, and involves shared decisions designed to improve the school?
8. Balances individual priorities with school and district needs and advances the profession as a whole?
9. Makes best use of new technologies?
10. Is site-based and supportive of a clearly articulated vision for students?

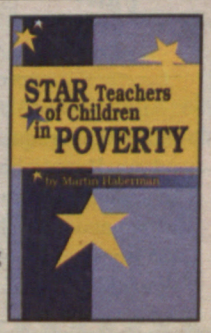
RESOURCES

Free or Inexpensive

CREATIVE FUN

365 Afterschool Activities. Here's the latest in the "365" series of Sourcebooks. This one's aimed at parents of 7- to 12-year-olds, but plenty of the book's projects could be done in the classroom as well. Example: how to use pizzas to teach geography. Other books in the series: *365 Days of Creative Play* and *365 Foods Kids Love to Eat*. Each of these paperbacks is $12.95. Call 800/727-8866.

URBAN EDUCATION



STAR Teachers of Children in Poverty. After more than 30 years of working in teacher education, University of Wisconsin professor Martin Haberman's developed some strong feelings about what makes a good, make that great, teacher of poor kids in urban areas. He calls them STAR teachers, and in this book he describes what sets them apart. To order, call 800/284-3167. Quantity discounts for 20 or more copies.

SOFTWARE SOURCE

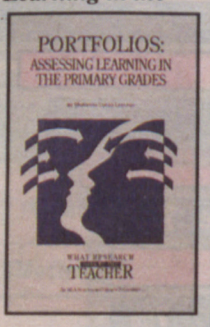
The Computer Museum Guide to the Best Software for Kids. Here's a handy guide for choosing education software from the Computer Museum in Boston. Over 200 reviews give you the basic information you need to choose good kids' software, including the software's target age, and its attention to looks (how visual it is), learning (how educational it is), and longevity (how long will it hold kids' interest). From HarperPerennial at $16. Available at bookstores or call 800/331-3761.

CARTOONS

Editorial Cartoons by Kids. Clever, cute, serious, funny, spooky. All descriptives fit when it comes to describing the cartoons in this paperback. The 100 kid-drawn cartoons are compiled from the 10,000 entered in NewsCurrents' 1995 student editorial cartoon contest. The name, grade, school, city, and state of the cartoonist accompanies each cartoon. For more information on the contest or to order, call Zino Press Children's Books, 800/356-2303. Educators' discount available.

ASSESSMENT

Portfolios: Assessing Learning in the Primary Grades. Marianne Lucas Lescher. A classroom teacher gives you her unique perspective on what research says to the teacher about portfolio assessment. 40 pp. (#1094-9-00-FF) $4.95 plus s&h. NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516. Call 800/229-4200.



HEALTH

The National Association of School Nurses' 1995-1996 Publication Catalog. This free catalog includes more than 25 educational manuals, directories, guidelines, and brochures—each with detailed description. For a copy, contact NASN, a 9,000-member non-profit speciality nursing organization, at P.O. Box 1300, Scarborough, ME 04070, 207/883-2117. E-mail NASN@aol.com.

VOUCHERS

False Choices. This special issue of *Rethinking Schools* focuses on school vouchers—from the perspective of more than a dozen education reform watchers. They include: Jonathan Kozol, writing about Christopher Whittle's commercialization efforts in the public schools, and Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA), on how "school choice" could hurt urban schools. Single copies are $3 each plus $2 s&h; 10-100 copies are $2 each plus $8 s&h. Call 414/964-9646.

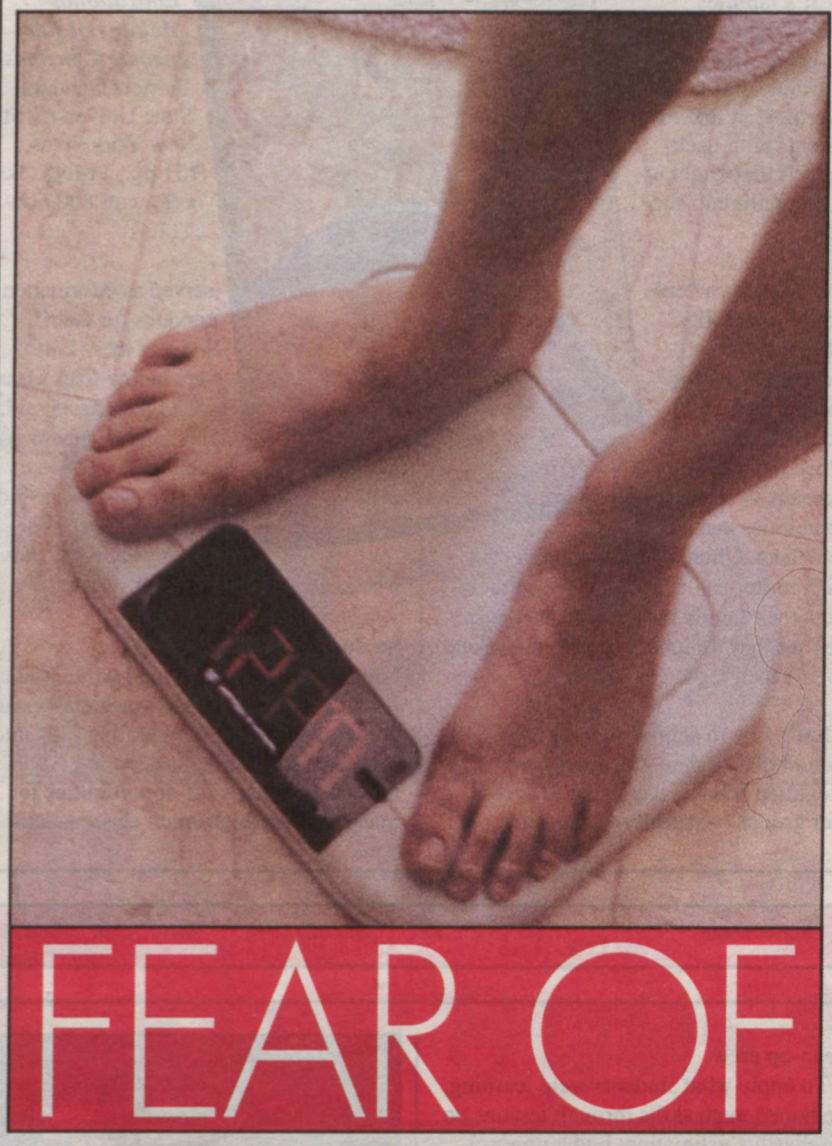
EDUCATION ISSUES

Phi Delta Kappa has eight new *Fastback* series titles out. The new topics include: *Controlling Aggressive Students, Outcome-Based Education,* and *Developing an Effective Advisor/Advisee Program.* Individual copies are $3, plus processing charge, with member and volume discounts available. Call 800/776-1156.

Health

Information about health factors that affect the way students learn

Michael Levine is a psychology professor at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. Author of How Schools Can Help Combat Student Eating Disorders: Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia *(NEA Professional Library, 1987), he is also the lead author of a curriculum guide on eating disorders published by the National Eating Disorders Organization.*



FEAR OF FAT

Students who are self-absorbed with body image may also suffer from potentially fatal eating disorders.

Can you define anorexia and bulimia in simple terms?
People with anorexia nervosa, which literally means "nervous lack of appetite," are fiercely determined to become thinner, and horrified at the prospect of becoming fatter. They're unwilling—and eventually unable—to eat properly to sustain themselves.

Bulimia involves episodes of binge eating followed immediately by purging to avoid weight gain—usually by self-induced vomiting. It can also include the use of laxatives and diuretics, excessive exercising, and rigid dieting. Over time it can become habitual and self-perpetuating.

It's not uncommon to have both anorexic and bulimic tendencies.

How widespread are these diseases among teenagers?
If we go by the strict definitions established by the American Psychiatric Association, we find that 0.5 to 1 percent of adolescent girls are anorexic at some point, and 4 to 6 percent are bulimic at some point.

However, there is a continuum here, and probably about another 5 percent, while not meeting the diagnostic criteria, have significant unhealthy or binge-dieting eating patterns and serious body image problems. In addition, surveys of high school and college students show that between 30 and 70 percent of females are unhappy with their bodies, and want to lose weight even though the mindset and process of weight loss would not be healthy for them.

Why are we talking primarily about females?
Whole books have been written to explain why this is primarily a female problem. If I were to revise my NEA book, I would put much greater emphasis on the role of sexism. Physical approval is still a major part of self-concept for females, much more so than for males, and beauty is defined in part, by slenderness.

There are other factors too—like the fact that female development in puberty does involve significant deposition of fat on the body. Also, other problems that are associated with eating disorders—like sexual abuse and depression—are much more common in females.

How can school employees detect these eating disorders in students?
That's difficult because of the preoccupation with thinness in our culture and the secretiveness involved. Still there are signs, including extreme concern with physical appearance and an all-or-nothing self-absorption with body image. A preoccupation with food and dieting can intrude into conversations, friendships, and activities—like refusing to go swimming "because I'm too fat."

Sometimes bulimics and anorexics start out overweight, yet their expressions of anxiety don't diminish with weight loss. Anorexics may begin appearing dangerously thin, and some people who are bingeing and purging may develop a swelling under the chin—a chipmunk-type appearance.

The stealing or hoarding of food, fasting, or keeping laxatives in a school locker can be other signs. Adults may also get reports that a student has been purging in the bathroom.

What should a school employee do when a student seems to have an eating disorder?
Teachers can't be therapists, so make sure you know how the counseling and referral system works in your school. What's critical is to be concerned but not judgmental. You should never promise to keep the information about an eating disorder secret—just make it clear that you want to get help. It's also important not to say that you'll be there for these students day or night—unless you really mean it.

Do educators need to look at their own attitudes about body image?
Absolutely. There's savage prejudice against the overweight in our culture. Educators have to make sure they help diminish the prejudice. School employees can't overcome the incredible cumulative effect of the culture, but they can make a difference. The more they know about the dangers and benefits of weight, about basic nutrition, and about the negative physical and psychological effects of dieting, the better.

Is there a special role for gym teachers and coaches?
Coaches and gym teachers have special opportunities to help. They often can see the excessive exercising or evidence of purging. They need to reach out to athletes and offer them support in ways that don't threaten participation in sports, while teaching that an obsession with weight can actually threaten their performance. And they can avoid weighing kids in public, using terms like "blubber butt," or pushing the idea that the less body fat the better.

Should teaching about eating disorders be done in schools?
Yes, but it should be done both earlier and later than it is now.

Studies suggest that just teaching about eating disorders in middle and high schools does little to diminish the problem. So what I mean by "earlier" is start teaching about them in elementary school. By "later" I mean teach prospective parents.

Resources

➤ *How Schools Can Help Combat Student Eating Disorders: Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia* by Michael Levine is available from the NEA Professional Library for $12.95 plus s&h. Call 800/229-4200.

➤ Eating Disorders Awareness & Prevention, Inc., provides K-12 materials at low or no cost. Write to 603 Stewart St., Suite 803, Seattle, WA 98101 or call 206/382-3587.

RESEARCH CLUES

When the Glass Is Half Full

A new study examines why, despite the odds, some Hispanic students succeed.

The high school dropout rate for Hispanic students today hovers near 50 percent. Yet Patricia Gándara, associate professor of education at the University of California, Davis, says there's a lot to be learned from studying the Hispanic students who succeed.

Her newest book, Over the Ivy Walls, *analyzes the success of 70 "Chicano students, born and raised in environments that typically yield failure." She discussed her findings with* NEA Today *assistant editor Stefanie Weiss.*

Why do so many researchers study failure?
Why do so many nightly news shows run negative stories? It's easier to see barriers than to see the things that work. And studies of failure do teach us a lot about what not to do. My concern is what *should* we be doing to help Chicano students succeed?

Did you find one key to success?
No. It's families, schools, communities, and peers—they all contribute. All the stars have to be in line for students with backgrounds that ought to predict failure to succeed.

You describe a "culture of possibility." What's that?
Successful Chicano students typically had mothers who helped them learn to dream, to see the possibilities that were there. Often, mothers will tell their children stories—legends, if you will—about their family background, so the children see they've inherited great things and that it's their legacy to do well.

Over the Ivy Walls: The Educational Mobility of Low-Income Chicanos. Patricia Gándara. State University of New York Press, 151 pp., $14.95. To order, call 800/666-2211.

What's key to school success?
I found that students who attended integrated schools were able to access peer groups—typically white—that served as information conduits for them. Some of these kids were in low-track classes, and their peers said, "Hey, if you want to go to college, you have to be in this class." The kids in college prep classes were surrounded by kids who knew how to work the system.

So do you favor tracking?
I don't see it as a black and white issue. Kids who are put in low-track classes are going to suffer. And separating kids into high- and low-track classes too early is a mistake and shuts off opportunities for many. But the high-track classes—and peers who see college as their birthright—saved the kids I studied.

What got these kids to college?
Ninety percent of the kids I studied looked very good on paper and would have qualified for most major universities on merit alone. Yet more than half said recruitment was key for them. The contact from a college gave them information, confidence, encouragement, and access to funding.

None of them could have gone to college without the funding—that was absolutely key. But the cream of the crop might not have made it to college had it not been for the outreach alone.

What's most important for teachers to hear?
Teachers shouldn't make assumptions about what a child's home experience is. Don't assume, for instance, that because a parent doesn't show up for meetings that the parent doesn't care. Parents in this study were extremely supportive of the goals of the school, but the teacher never saw them. To me, that says school employees need to sit down and rethink the relationship between home and school.

IDEA EXCHANGE

Building to Learn

The construction of Munchkin Manor—a 6' x 8' playhouse complete with carpeting, landscaping, and a skylight—taught my fourth graders much more than simply how to wield a hammer. This year-long project was the springboard for learning about everything from math to science to personal responsibility.

I was so excited when I found the blueprint for the house in *Workbench Magazine*, my enthusiasm spread from me to my students to the community. In a flash, we had raised some $700 in donations from local businesses to fund the construction.

Business people were intrigued by my idea of having the project simulate an actual construction site with students—many of whom were nonreaders—interviewing professionals so they could "become" carpenters, bookkeepers, and clean-up crew.

To apply what students were learning, we honed math skills through lessons on purchasing, estimating, budgeting; science skills through study of solar energy, electricity, botany; and language arts skills through exercises in interviewing and writing letters and resumes.

But perhaps the biggest learning payoffs for students employed by the "Rose Construction Company" came from working hard as a team, taking adult-style responsibility, and feeling pride in a finished product.

Kimberly Rose
Wakefield Elementary School
Turlock, California

Egg Drop Soup

How about an egg drop contest to psych up students about science principles like inertia, gravity, and momentum?

Each fall at my school, fifth and sixth grade teachers organize the contest, which draws school-wide attendance. The kids' challenge is to design a craft that will house an egg sufficiently so that when I drop it 75 feet from the school's roof it won't break.

Fifth graders are allowed to rig a parachute if they want, but sixth graders must rely on sheer ingenuity to come up with a protective craft. The assignments are judged on the basis of creativity, engineering, and artistic merit.

Some of the more ingenious entries have included suspending the egg in an inflated balloon or nerf ball, or from a wire pyramid-like structure that a student designed.

Dave Beig
Adams Elementary School
Boise, Idaho

Classroom Managers

To give my high school students ownership in my classroom, I get them involved in helping to manage the classroom in a few key ways.

First, I put two weeks of lesson plans on the bulletin board at a time so students can see them. Students have busy schedules and need to know what they're going to be doing. Then I take it a step further. I let the kids help in the preparation of lesson plans. Say, for instance, that students see we're going to be reading a novel. They decide (by majority rule) whether they're going to read it orally or silently, in class or at home.

Second, I offer students the opportunity to help keep a record of their progress. At the beginning of each term, I give students a blank grade sheet with room for the date, assignment, and score.

And I offer extra credit to those who keep accurate records. Grade time can be stressful for students, parents, and teachers. But having students track their own scores reduces that stress for all concerned.

Gordon Gerlitz
Dayton High School
Dayton, Washington

Share *Your* Ideas

You can pass along your classroom tips to *NEA Today's* 2.2 million readers in one of these five ways:

- ➤By mail to Idea Exchange, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
- ➤By phone, 202/822-7201.
- ➤By fax, 202/822-7206.
- ➤By NEA Online, keyword *NEA Today*.
- ➤By e-mail to *NEA Today*@aol.com.

Retirement

Retiring to Cyberspace

More and more retirees are going "online" to stay in touch with each other, the Association, and their profession, and to pursue their personal interests.

Not long ago, the information superhighway was traveled almost exclusively by twentysomethings with advanced degrees in computer science.

Not anymore. Today "cyberspace" is being explored by millions of Americans, including a growing number of retirees who've discovered that "surfing the Internet" can be an exciting way to spend their retirement years.

"Just five years ago, cyberspace was a forbidding place that was difficult to maneuver," notes Sam Pizzigati, director of NEA Publishing. "You had to be some kind of computer whiz to take advantage of it.

"But now, with the emergence of the World Wide Web, surfing cyberspace has become very easy and a lot of fun. And there are all sorts of things of particular interest to retirees."

➤ Planning a vacation? You can become your own travel agent and make airline and hotel reservations and rental car arrangements.

➤ Looking for advice on retirement planning? You can access libraries of information on managing your personal finances, including funding your retirement.

➤ Interested in shopping? You can browse through warehouses of clothing, home electronics, and other merchandise and make purchases at discounted prices.

➤ Interested in communicating with other retired teachers? You can "talk" to thousands of retirees who share your personal and professional interests.

In short, the list of online opportunities is endless.

So, how do you go about retiring to cyberspace? The first step, if you haven't already done so, is to purchase a modem—a device that allows your computer to send and receive data via telephone lines. (Modems start at about $40.) The next step is to contact your Association.

Two years ago, NEA and America Online, the nation's fastest growing computer network, joined forces to make it easy for NEA members to explore cyberspace.

The result: a special area on America Online called NEA Online, designed exclusively for NEA members.

"Our goal was to create a way for our members to communicate with one another and feel more connected," says Kimberley Adams-Armstrong, a staffer at NEA Member Benefits. "We also wanted to address the issue of classroom isolation by linking teachers with similar concerns and experiences.

"A third goal was to enhance our members' professionalism," notes Adams-Armstrong. "NEA Online gives members access to libraries of information that can help them do their jobs."

Those libraries range from consumer guides to curriculum initiatives to transcripts of online conferences. The service also features more than 70 message boards, including one specifically for retirees. Subscribers can use the message boards to ask questions, request help, raise a concern, or respond to comments posted by other members.

NEA Online subscribers can also access America Online (AOL), which features a huge number of general interest services, ranging from Library of Congress reports—and even an entire encyclopedia—to news, games, movie reviews, shopping, and sports.

What's more, AOL provides a gateway to the World Wide Web, a graphical interface that makes it easy to use the Internet, the so-called "network of networks" that links some 20 million people worldwide.

NEA Online currently boasts about 25,000 subscribers. One of these is NEA-Retired member Mary Lou Berry of Euclid, Ohio. "I've been an activist all my life, and keeping in touch with what's new in education is very important to me," Berry says.

"I use NEA Online to keep current on issues impacting public education, to meet old and new friends, and to share my views with other professionals," she continues.

"I also use it to monitor pending legislation that impacts public schools and use that information when writing to my legislators.

"I find being online an invaluable asset in getting the word out," notes Berry. "I wonder sometimes what we ever did without it."

NEA-R member Barbara Gilhaus of Homer, Illinois, also found NEA Online invaluable during a recent health insurance crisis in her state. "I was able to get immediate information so that I could contact the retirees in my local and keep them up to date," she explains.

"But I especially enjoyed being able to get daily summaries of the NEA Representative Assembly this year," Gilhaus adds. "I was a delegate for 15 years, and the summaries helped me feel as though I were still a part of the Assembly."

For NEA-R member John Leary, being online has been both educational and fun.

"My wife and I are public education retirees from Wilmington, Delaware, now living in Georgia," he says. "I use America Online, specifically my e-mail capability, to keep in touch with our children and grandchildren back in Delaware. I also use many areas of the main menu, including Travel.

"NEA Online allows me to keep up with happenings in education in general, and in Delaware specifically," notes Leary. "I like to know about pending legislation and what's happening on the Delaware educational scene."

NEA Online is expanding by about 1,000 subscribers per month. A growing number of these are retirees who want to stay hooked into the Association, their profession, and the world.

"Cyberspace isn't just for twentysomethings anymore," notes NEA's Sam Pizzigati. "If you're a retiree and have the time, being online is a great way to explore your hobbies, personal financial interests, and professional interests. And it's a great form of entertainment."

How To Get Online

Your free NEA Online starter kit is available by calling toll-free 800/781-5577 and ask for America Online's free software and special offer for NEA members.

Once you install your starter kit, you can access NEA Online and, in your first month online, get 10 free hours on the standard America Online service.

There are a number of other benefits available to NEA-R members through NEA-Retired and NEA Member Benefits. For information about NEA-Retired, contact your state Association.

For additional information about NEA Member Benefits, call 800/537-4636, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday to Friday; 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturdays.

People

Paul Body

Dancing Across The Divide

Imagine Hispanic and African-American students breaking down the tensions and barriers between them and discovering similarities in rhythm and culture.

Welcome to the dance world of **Wendy Ellen Cochran**, where anything is possible.

Cochran, who teaches at Oakland Technical High School, believes in the power of dance as a bridge between cultures and communities. "Once students begin to see dance as inclusive, they make room in the rest of their world."

So, Cochran reasons, a street dance festival in the middle of Oakland linking Filipino with Hispanic, African-American with Afro-Cuban may teach the students involved the potential of forging a link between their moves and those of dancers of other countries—or cultures.

Not all of Cochran's goals are so weighty. She's been working to get high school football players to master the delicate steps and swaying rhythm of the rhumba.

Football players? "Well I've been coaching them in stretching exercises this year," laughs Cochran. "Now, I'm getting them to limber up to salsa and rhumba."

Dan Loftin

No Passing Fancy

Metro Nashville is a key resettlement site for U.N.-designated refugees, and **Julia Lydon**, an ESL teacher and guidance counselor at Glencliff High School, works with every ethnic group from Bosnians to Sudanese.

And Kurds. Curious about what makes these people a nation—despite their statelessness—Lydon applied for and received a $3,200 fellowship to study Kurdish literature from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Last summer, with that stipend, she first researched translations at Brooklyn's Kurdish Heritage Museum and Library, then read for weeks on end, "looking for recurrent themes to identify what Kurds consider important to being Kurdish," she says.

Lydon, who holds a Ph.d. in anthropology, is in her element. In assembling her report for the NEH, she concluded, "Family solidarity—including extended family—is very important to Kurds, as well as maintaining their identity through the use of language, food, and dress."

"There are refugees whenever there is discord in the world," sighs Lydon. "We all have to get along."

Edward McCain

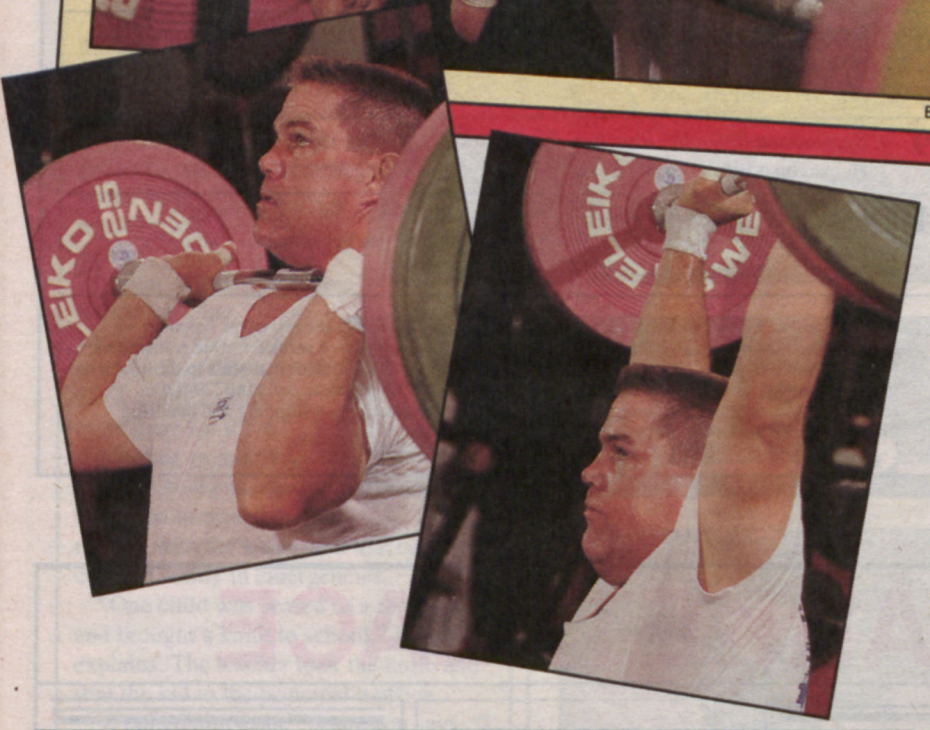
Flex Time

Weightlifters are about as common in America as "timpani players in the band," says champion lifter and Arizona physical education teacher **Bill Ferrill**. But that doesn't deter him from living what he calls "a Rocky Balboa lifestyle"—teaching, training, then traveling the world to compete.

This past year, Ferrill won a gold medal at the Pan American Masters in Canada and a bronze at the World Masters Championships in Vienna, lifting nearly 300 pounds in the clean-and-jerk event. His personal best in the event: a whopping 363 pounds.

For most Americans, Ferrill says, weightlifting is a "circus sideshow." They don't realize that the sport requires strength plus "dynamic precision, force times velocity. In a snatch lift, you have to lift that weight faster than George Foreman's right hook."

Ferrill's still driven to compete at age 41. Why? "I know that I can persevere and win something worldwide," Ferrill says. "But it won't be an Olympic gold medal. That would have meant everything."



Star Attraction

West Virginia teacher **Gwen Lacy**'s "15 minutes of fame" were actually more like two minutes, but is Lacy complaining? "Not when those two minutes are a movie scene with Richare Gere," sighs Lacy, a second grade teacher at McDowell Elementary School.

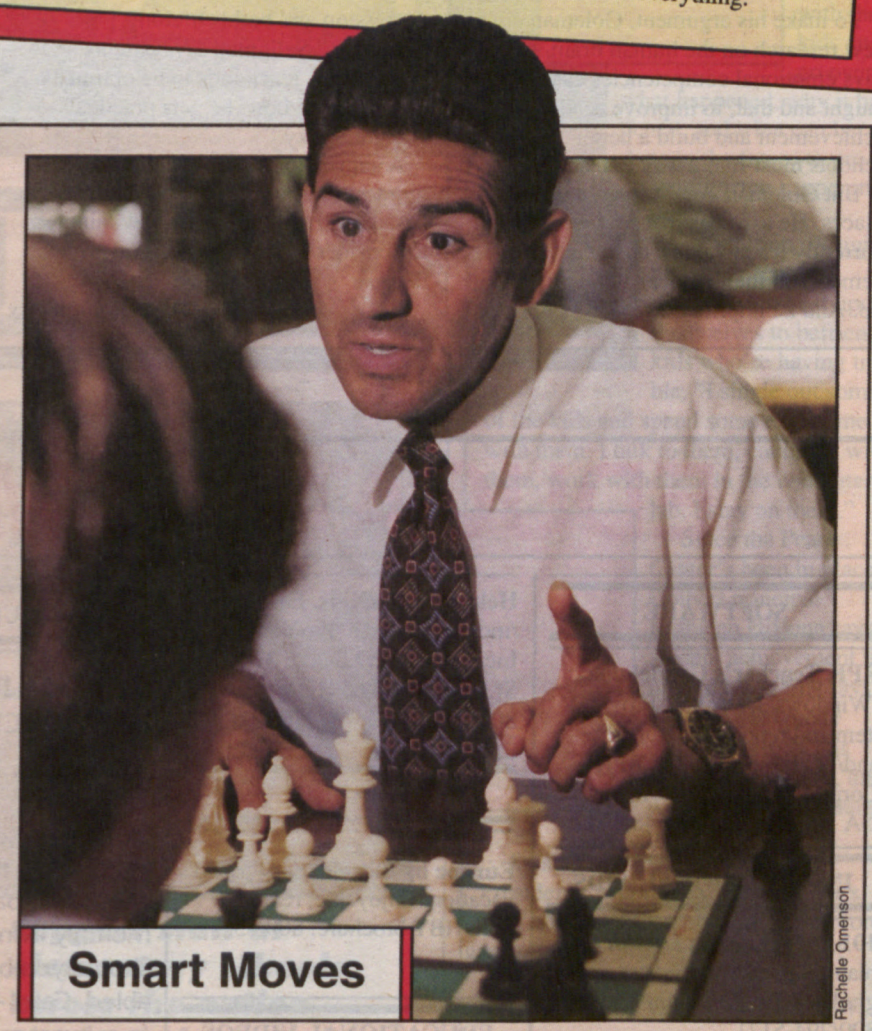
Gere was in town to film scenes for his latest movie, *Primal Fear*, scheduled for release this winter. In the film, Gere plays a defense attorney who travels to his client's hometown to learn more about his background.

More than 100 locals were hired as extras, but Lacy got chosen for a small speaking part. "Naturally, Gere's investigation leads to his client's elementary school," Lacy explains. "And that leads to our encounter in the hallway. I tell him where his client's former teacher is located."

For her appearance and the day's shooting Lacy was paid $572. "Not bad for a day's work," says the McDowell County teacher.

And her cinematic moment continues to pay off. "I've become quite a celebrity with my students, the school, even my own son," laughs Lacy. "And I have Richard Gere to thank for that!"

WVEA



Rachelle Omenson

Smart Moves

During recess, **Rafael Cruz** takes students into a world of kings, queens, knights, castles—rooks, pawns, and checkmate.

"I thought it would be a good idea for kids to try something besides basketball and soccer during their recess," says Cruz, a security officer at George Washington School in Hillside, New Jersey. "Chess allows them to think creatively outside the classroom."

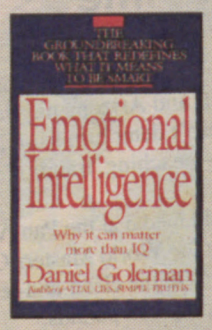
Last year, Cruz recruited a small group of children and began teaching them the game. "It really took off," he says. "I was surprised at how fast they were able to learn the game." Now some 35 fifth and sixth graders have expanded their minds on the playground by discovering chess.

In February, Cruz's students matched wits with fifth and sixth graders from the neighboring town of Elizabeth in a friendly chess tournament. "It went very well," Cruz said. "Chess is enjoying a resurgence right now. I hope it will be part of the regular school curriculum sometime soon."

BOOK BEAT

How-to Raise Good Kids

These bestsellers offer wisdom, insight—and a fair amount of pap.


THE GROUNDBREAKING BOOK THAT REDEFINES WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SMART
Emotional Intelligence
Why it can matter more than IQ
Daniel Goleman

Emotional Intelligence Daniel Goleman
Bantam Books, 352 pp.,$23.95

In September, this book made the cover of *TIME* magazine with its claim to "redefine what it means to be smart." A *New York Times* science reporter, Daniel Goleman concludes that emotional smarts—self-awareness, impulse control, persistence, empathy, and a few other traits—are better predictors of success in life than IQ.

To make his argument, Goleman cites new research on the human brain. He says emotional competencies can be taught and that, to improve academic achievement and build a better society, schools must find a way to teach them.

But Goleman goes wrong in two places. He assumes that teachers don't currently teach values, character, or "emotional intelligence." Of course they do. And he implies that there's only one definition of "smart" that's valid. Shouldn't we value all kinds of smarts?

THE Optimistic Child
A Revolutionary Program That Safeguards Children Against Depression & Builds Lifelong Resilience
MARTIN E. P. SELIGMAN, Ph.D.

The Optimistic Child Martin Seligman
Houghton Mifflin Co., 336 pp.,$24.95

"Something striking has happened to the self-esteem of American children during the era of raising our children to feel good," Martin Seligman writes. "They have never been more depressed."

A professor of psychology, Seligman blames the self-esteem movement for breeding cynicism and despair. Kids who are told they're great—regardless of their achievements—don't believe it. And after a while, they don't work to achieve. Why bother if a ho-hum effort gets the same enthusiastic response from adults as a wiz-bang one?

Touting his book as "a revolutionary program that safeguards children against depression and builds lifelong resilience," Seligman says parents and teachers can teach kids to be optimists. In explaining how, he gets practical—and gimmicky.

A suggestion: Skip past the 48-question test to determine if your children are pessimists. Instead, take a few minutes to consider how you praise and criticize them.

—Stefanie Weiss

The NEA Professional Library's Top Ten
NEA Bestsellers

Current Rank		Previous Rank
1	***Countdown to the First Day of School,*** Schell & Burden. ($4.95) A "must-have" checklist for every beginning elementary teacher. (#2150-9-00-FB)	[1]
2	***Geography Across the Curriculum,*** Dennis Reinhartz and Judy Reinhartz. ($10.95) Integrating the curriculum for geographic literacy. (#3070-2-00-FB)	
3	***The Healthy School Handbook: Conquering the Sick Building Syndrome and Other Environmental Hazards In and Around Your School,*** Norma L. Miller, ed. ($21.95) Find out how sick building syndrome affects teaching and learning. (#1863-X-20-FB)	[6]
4	***The First Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8),*** Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (#1862-1-10-FB)	[3]
5	***Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools (Grades 6-12),*** by Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom. ($15.95) Ways to stop and prevent harassment. (#1864-8-00-FB)	[8]
6	***Multi-Age Classrooms,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Six examples of how mixed-age groupings inspire teachers to innovate. (#2907-0-00-FB)	[11]
7	***Toward Inclusive Classrooms,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Stories on how students with special needs can learn with their peers. (#2903-8-00-FB)	[5]
8	***Student Portfolios,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Insights from your colleagues on how to use portfolios to assess and enhance student learning. (#2901-1-00-FB)	[2]
9	***Becoming a Reflective Teacher,*** Leonard Kochendorfer. ($16.95) Helps you critically examine and improve your teaching. (#3352-3-00-FB)	
10	***Innovative Discipline,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Innovative discipline strategies that elementary and secondary teachers say can change the whole cultural of your school. (#2904-6-00-FB)	[4]

The numbers in brackets indicate last month's rankings, if any. All the resources listed above are published by and available from the NEA Professional Library, a service for NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community. To order any title listed here or for more information, call 800/229-4200. (Note: The prices listed are member prices, where applicable. Also, a shipping and handling charge will be added to all orders.)

EDUCATION MARKETPLACE

SOFTWARE

RPK Teacher's Gradebook (Windows 3.1 or 95). Provides itemized reports for students and/or classes. $39.95, RPK Corp., PO Box 1189, Athens, GA 30603. Tel. 706/548-1212.

INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS

101 Daily English Lesson plans. Time/Work Savers, grades 4-12. Free samples. 800/294-5171.

Want perfect pupils? 2 manuals ($35) create self-managed kids begging advice. Work, stress & guilt fade. Send SASE to 21863 Brill, Moreno Valley, CA 92553.

EMPLOYMENT

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EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS

Trauma in Children, a video for schools. Features 5 noted specialists. $100. 800/888-5236.

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Many Nations Calendar 1996. A 98 page wall calendar with over 700 holidays, festivals, historical events, and birth dates including descriptions of each. ($12.95 + $1.50 ship.) POB 1426, Mill Valley, CA 94941.

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SchoolSite

NEA members working to make schools run better

Ellen Banner

Secretary Maxine Stone chats with fourth graders on the playground at Blakely Elementary School on Bainbridge Island in Washington State.

Keeping The Peace

School support employees—be they bus drivers, secretaries, cafeteria workers, custodians, or playground and classroom aides—have always played a big role in resolving kids' disputes.

But that role has gotten bigger lately as elementary schools around the country have established mentoring programs, conflict resolution policies, and peace centers to teach even the youngest children how to handle their differences—without violence.

Calvin Langston is a supervision aide at Cloverdale Elementary School in Little Rock, Arkansas and a mentor in the school's Straight Talk program.

Once a month, dozens of third- to sixth-grade boys gather to talk with mentors about things like trouble at home or why they've been fighting at school.

"A lot of kids don't have fathers at home," says Langston. "It's not in my job description, but I see it as my calling just to be there for them."

Meeting regularly with the students allows Langston to establish rapport with the kids—and that can come in handy in emergencies.

"One child was scared of a few kids and brought a knife to school," Langston explains. The teacher took the knife and sent the kid to the principal's office.

"I pulled him aside," Langston says. "I told him, this is what could happen to you if you do this. He listened. He didn't have any problems after that."

Across the country in Washington State, the problem wasn't quite so serious.

"Two young ladies who brought their lunches began to trade," explains Judy Carlbom, a secretary and former aide at Blakely Elementary School on Bainbridge Island.

"But what started out as friendly trading, for some reason, escalated. The more they traded, the angrier they got. We eventually talked it out and mediated a solution: only one trade per lunch per day. There hasn't been any trouble since."

Kelly Quinn

"If you talk to a kid with a sincere heart," says Arkansas supervision aide and mentor Calvin Langston, "he's going to listen to you."

D. J. Meeks

Florida teacher aide Natalie Wiggins helps students learn to mediate disputes themselves.

Support staff at elementary schools across the nation teach students to keep their fists down and their minds open. After all, they learn better that way.

The mediation procedure Carlbom used was established three years ago when employees began to meet to discuss school problems.

"We listened to the aides who work on the playground every day," says school secretary Maxine Stone, "and all of us together came up with a good idea. Now we allow students to write about the behavior that got them into trouble and designate someone they'd like to talk with to solve it.

"Most often the problem's solved by the student and playground aide," Stone says. "But if that's not working, the student has a chance to constructively involve someone else."

As a result, Carlbom says, "we see happier students. They realize that things will be worked out, and they know they will be heard."

At Colbert Elementary in Hollywood, Florida, kids with a score to settle meet at the Peace Center, an area outside in the quadrangle adorned with murals painted by students. There they talk out their dispute with the help of an adult from the community trained in mediation by the Peace Education Foundation.

Natalie Wiggins, a teacher aide, serves on Colbert's safe school planning committee. "A lot of people are involved now," she says, "so when there's a problem, we're getting right to the bottom of things. "When it comes to fighting and acting out in class, we sit down with the kids and go over what happened, why it happened, and what can be done in the future to prevent it from happening again."

In addition, Wiggins and other school employees take it upon themselves to befriend kids who're having trouble. "I single out some of the kids and spend some extra time with them. I talk to them, eat lunch with them, work with them in the computer lab. I stay on them."

Since the Peace Center's been in place, Colbert principal Kathleen DiBona says student achievement is up. And Wiggins says the mood is "pretty calm. Kids aren't as mean as they were, and we don't have as many problems."

An added bonus: Last summer, President Clinton presented Colbert's staff with the Department of Education's national Safe and Drug-Free School Award.

—Stefanie Weiss

SchoolSite is a new *NEA Today* feature highlighting efforts by NEA members to make schools run more smoothly. If you're working to create a safer and healthier learning environment, save your district money, or better serve the entire education community, we want to know about it.

Get your story to us by sending a note to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Or you can send a fax to 202/822-7206, an e-mail to NEATODAY2@aol.com, or call 202/822-7258.

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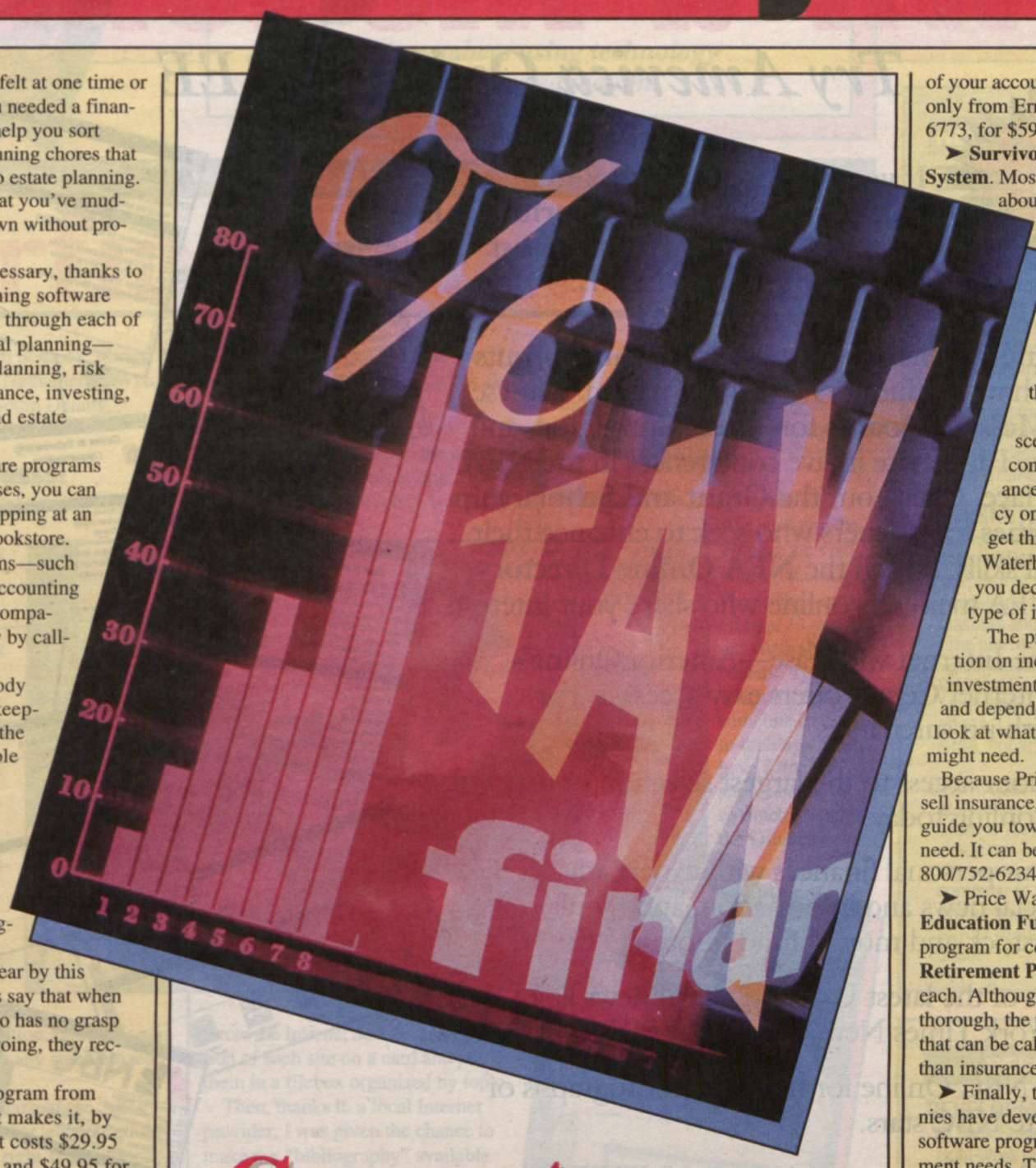
Money



Computer as Money Manager

No need to flip a coin or pay an expert. Financial planning software can help you make the tough calls.

You've probably felt at one time or another that you needed a financial planner to help you sort through the myriad planning chores that range from budgeting to estate planning. Chances are, though, that you've muddled through on your own without professional help.

That's no longer necessary, thanks to the new financial planning software programs that lead you through each of the six steps of financial planning—budgeting, cash flow planning, risk management and insurance, investing, retirement planning, and estate planning.

Here are some software programs to consider. In many cases, you can get a better price by shopping at an office supply store or bookstore. But some of the programs—such as those developed by accounting firms and mutual fund companies—are available only by calling an 800 number.

➤ **Quicken**. Everybody loves Quicken, a bookkeeping program that helps the most disorganized people get with it. If you feel completely at sea, this program can help you gain control. You'll be able to get started on a budget, get a handle on your cash flow, even figure out your taxes.

Financial planners swear by this program. Many planners say that when they get a new client who has no grasp on where the money is going, they recommend Quicken.

You can order the program from Intuit, the company that makes it, by calling 800/624-8742. It costs $29.95 for the regular program and $49.95 for the deluxe program or CD-ROM version. You might also check a software retailer like MacWarehouse (800/255-6227) or Egghead Software (800/EGG-HEAD) or an office supply store.

➤ **Quicken Financial Planner**. This newer program aims to make even computerphobes comfortable by including educational sessions with financial columnist Jane Bryant Quinn as well as colorful charts and graphs to help you see how much money you will need for retirement and how you can best get there. It also helps you find the best mutual funds for your needs and determine an asset allocation mix. It's available for $39.95 from Intuit.

➤ **Prosper.** Ernst & Young, the accounting firm, developed Prosper for companies that wanted to provide financial education for employees. Ernst and Young's Patrice Ingrassia says the firm got so much positive feedback they made it available to the public.

This is a terrific program, perhaps the most comprehensive piece of financial planning software available. It starts with budgeting and cash flow and moves on to estimating income taxes, college planning, buying life and disability insurance, retirement planning, and estate planning.

Prosper allows you to compare leasing a car to buying a car, helps you decide whether to refinance your home, generates a personal balance sheet, and helps you see how your tax bill will change based on financial decisions you make. A section on 401(k) planning allows you to change each of the variables—such as the earnings rate, your contribution, and the company match—and see how that will affect what you'll have at retirement.

The program is very flexible. You can change the underlying assumptions about inflation or about what your money will earn to see how that will affect your nest egg. It also allows you to vary your risk profile along a continuum from very conservative to very aggressive.

The program recommends asset allocation for different goals and time periods. Plus, it allows you to get price information on securities, like stocks and mutual funds, from Reuters Money Network so that you can determine the value of your account. Prosper is available only from Ernst & Young, 800/277-6773, for $59.95.

➤ **Survivor Income Planning System**. Most people don't want to think about life insurance, even though they know they need it. So rather than determining how much insurance they need, they simply take the word of a salesperson who makes his money based on the size of their policy.

If you see yourself in this scenario—but would like to compute your own life insurance needs and shop for a policy on your own—you'll want to get this program from Price Waterhouse. It's designed to help you decide how much and what type of insurance you need.

The program asks for information on income, pension plans, investments and other assets, debts, and dependents. It then provides a look at what resources your survivors might need.

Because Price Waterhouse does not sell insurance, the program does not guide you toward buying more than you need. It can be ordered for $45 by calling 800/752-6234.

➤ Price Waterhouse also offers **Education Funding System**, a software program for college planning, and **Retirement Planning System**, for $45 each. Although these programs, too, are thorough, the price is stiff for functions that can be calculated much more easily than insurance needs.

➤ Finally, three mutual fund companies have developed very inexpensive software programs for calculating retirement needs. The **Vanguard Retirement Planner** (800/937-8368), the **T. Rowe Price Retirement Planning Kit** (800/638-7890), and **Fidelity Retirement Planning Thinkware** (800/457-1768) are just $15 each. T. Rowe introduces a new version of its program this month. All of the programs offer good, basic information.

—Mary Rowland

You can find answers to some of your toughest financial questions through NEA Online. By accessing the NEA Member Benefits section of NEA Online, you can download informative and practical guides to tax-deferred annuities, investments, and financial planning.

You can find out how to save for your retirement and reduce your taxes at the same time, determine your risk tolerance level, and prepare a balance sheet. To find out how to sign up, call NEA Member Benefits at 800/637-4636, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET, Monday to Friday; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. ET.

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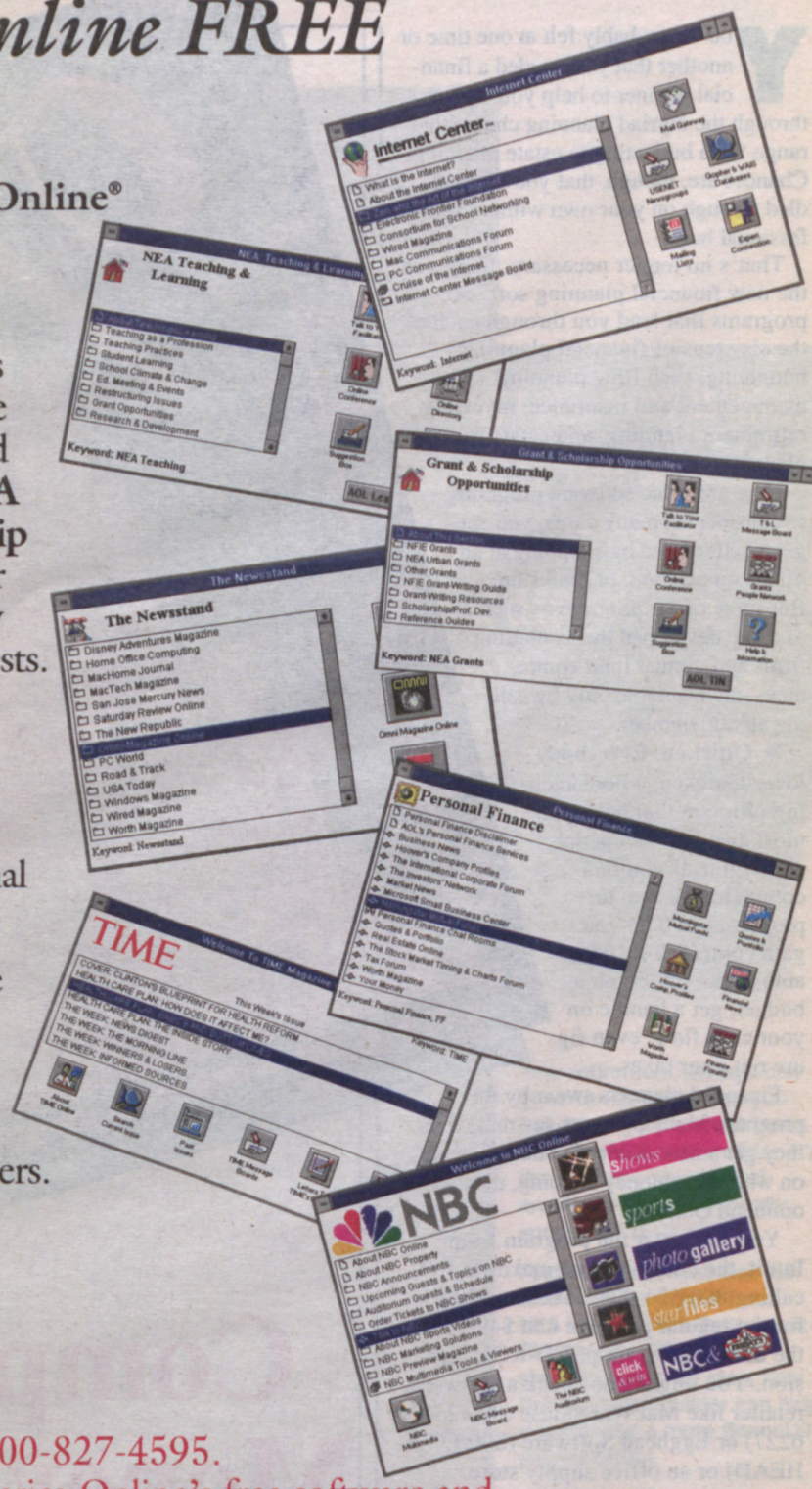

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16889/W

ByteSize

NEA members using technology to improve education

IN THE CLASSROOM

Surfing Made Easy

WHO: Kathleen Schrock, library media specialist, Nathaniel H. Wixon Middle School, South Dennis, Massachusetts.

E-MAIL ADDRESS: kschrock@capecod.net

WHAT: Surfing the Internet can turn up hundreds of valuable teaching resources, but it can take thousands of hours to find them all. Here they're all gathered in one place.

INSPIRATION: I see the Internet as a classroom expander. But a couple of years ago I realized that although the Internet offered a huge amount of information, none of it was accessible through any standardized search tool.

I wanted to organize these "sites" on the Internet so that teachers could have information right at their fingertips and use the Internet more effectively in the classroom.

So I pored over various publications and spent thousands of hours surfing the 'Net myself. Now I've gathered information on more than 600 sites. Cool School Tools and the Cisco List of Education Sites are among my favorites, because they enhance not only curriculum but also professional development.

Each of these sites has an "address." (For example, the address for Cool School Tools is http://www.bham.lib.al.us/cooltools.) At first, I wrote the Internet address and description of each site on a card and put them in a filebox organized by topic.

Then, thanks to a local Internet provider, I was given the chance to make my "bibliography" available to educators around the world. I got my own "home page"—my own site. I've called it Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators. And its address is http://www.capecod.net/Wixon/Wixon.htm.

Things are still organized by topic—arts, history, science, weather, etc. Clicking on any topic produces a list of all the sites I've collected under that topic. And clicking on any one item in the list automatically takes you to that site.

CLICK: When a sixth-grade class was studying the *Titanic*, we visited the Titanic Home Page created by a 13-year-old Australian student. The class was amazed someone so close to their age could have a quality site—and know so much about the *Titanic*!

Photos by Steve Heaslip

BYTES FOR BEGINNERS

Technology goals should be intrinsically linked to your long-term educational vision. The decisions you make early on may dictate your options later—where you place wires and what hardware you purchase now may affect your capacity a few years down the road. Some things to keep in mind:

➤ Pooling your buying power with neighboring districts may allow you to split the costs of consultants and maintenance resources. Bulk purchases and larger service contracts may decrease your costs.

➤ Including all constituents of your community in technology planning will ensure a more widespread commitment to the plan's success. Good business partners may offer not only financial and technical resources but expertise in budgeting and planning, too.

➤ Coordinating with community groups may produce other bonuses. For instance, wiring schools may fit into an overall plan by your local government for bringing the community online. Libraries may play a significant role in providing out-of-school access to those who do not have computers at home.

How long does it take to detect any measurable effect of technology on student learning, and what are the best tools for doing this? Those who have pioneered good technology plans can provide valuable insight on questions like these.

For perspective on what others are doing, check out *Plans and Policies for Technology in Educaton* ($35 from the National School Boards Association, 703/838-6722).

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

ED WEB

■ The U.S. Department of Education's improved version of its World Wide Web page provides info on the Department, funding, programs, services, and much more (http://www.ed.gov). It includes the America Goes Back to School page, with a "Partners Activity Guide" that offers back-to-school tips for your classroom and ideas on getting technology and computers into the classroom (http://www.ed.gov/Family/BTS/).

INTERNET REVEALED

■ A series of four videotapes, *Internet Revealed*, offers an overview of the Internet and its educational resources for both teachers and students. Limited time pre-release price, $99; individual tapes, $39. Contact Kim Conlin, Classroom Connect, 1866 Village Lane, P.O. Box 10488, Lancaster, PA 17605-0488, 800/638-1639.

ONE COMPUTER

■ *The One Computer Classroom Video & Technology Planning Guide* lays out the options for classrooms that have just one computer to work with. To borrow a free copy, contact Tom Snyder Productions, 800/342-0236.

RESOURCES

DEVELOPMENT

■ Bank Street College offers eight-week professional development seminars for K-8 educators over the Internet. The focus: math instruction and helping educators bring National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards to their classrooms. E-mail cct@edc.org or visit (http://www.edc.org/CCT/mlf/MLF.html).

WHAT'S ACCEPTABLE

■ For information on acceptable use policies, check out (gopher://riceinfo.rice.edu:8002/7?acceptable). To get related materials, send a $10 check (payable to SCWriP, with "IWAYX" on the memo line) to Stephen Marcus, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106.

MORE DEVELOPMENT

■ Professional development resources divided by curriculum areas including special ed and international studies can be found at (http:// curry.edschool.virginia.edu/teis/) or gopher to (curry.edschool.virginia.edu).

Your NEA

Report of Campaign Revenue and Expenses

AN ACCOUNTING

Standing Rule 10.E provides as follows:

Campaign Expenses. No portion of dues money collected at the local, regional, state, or national level shall be used to promote the candidacy of any individual for an NEA office.

Using forms provided by the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules, each candidate shall file a preliminary report of campaign revenues and expenses, including projected revenues and expenses, with the committee prior to the opening of nominations at the Representative Assembly. A final report, on the forms provided by the committee, must be filed with the committee no later than thirty (30) days following certification of the election results. The committee shall report to the Representative Assembly, prior to any nominations or elections, whether any candidate has in any manner violated the election rules and regulations. The final report of campaign revenues and expenditures shall be printed in an appropriate NEA publication for inspection by any member.

The following reports were filed in a timely manner and are printed pursuant to Rule 10.E.

Candidates are listed below by office and by alphabetical order within each office.

Candidates for Executive Committee

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$1,595.26
Individuals within the state	$485.00	Mailing	$262.67
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	$2,805.91
Individuals outside the state	$1,354.00	Hospitality and entertainment	$444.40
Groups outside the state	328.00	Campaign committee expenses	$10,786.74
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$2,766.00	Giveaways	$409.82
Donations in kind	$1,199.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$670.25
TOTAL	$6,132.00	TOTAL	$16,975.05

Signed: **Samuel F. Carcione**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$1,433.40
Individuals within the state	$800.00	Mailing	$1,464.94
Groups within the state	$150.00	Other media materials	$1,505.18
Individuals outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	$1,935.00
Groups outside the state	$500.00	Campaign committee expenses	$3,094.50
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$13,601.00	Giveaways	$3,096.70
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$7,350.00
TOTAL	$15,051.00	TOTAL	$19,879.72

Signed: **Sara D. Flores**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$3,185.23
Individuals within the state	$10,215.58	Mailing	223.35
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	$2,160.73
Individuals outside the state	$2,450.00	Hospitality and entertainment	$774.82
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign committee expenses	$4,382.54
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$5,000.00	Giveaways	$1,000.00
Donations in kind	$900.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$464.90
TOTAL	$18,565.58	TOTAL	$12,191.57

Signed: **Denise Rockwell (Woods)**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$7,954.80
Individuals within the state	$7,603.70	Mailing	$470.76
Groups within the state	$435.00	Other media materials	$1,140.34
Individuals outside the state	$1,225.00	Hospitality and entertainment	$444.40
Groups outside the state	$317.77	Campaign committee expenses	$6,560.49
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$11,217.85	Giveaways	$1,345.89
Donations in kind	$3,350.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$4,082.64
TOTAL	$24,149.32	TOTAL	$21,999.32

Signed: **Roger F. Sharp**

Candidate for At-Large Representative of Administrators on NEA Board of Directors

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$800.00
Individuals within the state	$567.90	Mailing	$100.00
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Individuals outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign committee expenses	$100.00
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0	Giveaways	$1,427.00
Donations in kind	$1,000.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$50.00
TOTAL	$1,567.90	TOTAL	$2,477.00

Signed: **Josephine L. Harris**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$449.00
Individuals within the state	$660.23	Mailing	$70.00
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Individuals outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign committee expenses	0
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0	Giveaways	$141.23
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0
TOTAL	$660.23	TOTAL	$660.23

Signed: **Relzie M. Payton**

Candidate for At-Large Representative of Classroom Teachers in Higher Education on NEA Board of Directors

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$680.08
Individuals within the state	$1,014.34	Mailing	$321.00
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	$143.92
Individuals outside the state	$50.00	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	$250.00	Campaign committee expenses	$150.00
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0	Giveaways	0
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0
TOTAL	$1,314.34	TOTAL	$1,295.00

Signed: **Mary Ann Pacheco**

Candidates for At-Large Representative of Active Members Employed in Educational Support Positions on NEA Board of Directors

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$926.58
Individuals within the state	$620.00	Mailing	$66.03
Groups within the state	$184.00	Other media materials	0
Individuals outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	$33.43
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign committee expenses	$695.96
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$862.00	Giveaways	$147.96
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$168.86
TOTAL	$1,666.00	TOTAL	$2,038.82

Signed: **Faye L. Daniels**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$275.00
Individuals within the state	$320.00	Mailing	$250.00
Groups within the state	$500.00	Other media materials	$875.00
Individuals outside the state	$20.00	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign committee expenses	$360.00
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$1,630.00	Giveaways	
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$1,000.00
TOTAL	$2,470.00	TOTAL	$2,760.00

Signed: **Denise B. Hacker**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$298.00
Individuals within the state	$50.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	$40.21
Individuals outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign committee expenses	0
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$457.00	Giveaways	$56.00
Donations in kind	$9.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$95.00
TOTAL	$516.00	TOTAL	$489.21

Signed: **Iona A. Holloway**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$545.33
Individuals within the state	$236.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Individuals outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign committee expenses	$110.00
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$312.00	Giveaways	0
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0
TOTAL	$548.00	TOTAL	$655.33

Signed: **Clarice M. Knutson**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$1,924.66
Individuals within the state	$895.54	Mailing	$8.32
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	$206.83
Individuals outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Groups outside the state	0	Campaign committee expenses	$236.54
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	$1,455.00	Giveaways	0
Donations in kind	$60.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0
TOTAL	$2,410.54	TOTAL	$2,376.35

Signed: **Pat Matosky**

NEA Q&A

Coming Attraction

NEA is in the process of setting up its own home page on the World Wide Web. The Web allows easy access to information on the Internet, the vast electronic network that links more than 20 million people worldwide. Here's why that's important.

What is the World Wide Web?
The World Wide Web, or "the Web" as it's more commonly known, isn't really a place but a hyperlink tool that allows people access to the Internet. It's a "graphic interface," which means that you can easily call up documents containing text, graphics, photos, sound, even video. Each of these documents is called a "home page." NEA is now working to establish its own home page.

Why is NEA so interested in the Web?
The Web is a terrific multimedia way to share information with NEA members and the public. Using the Web, NEA can, for example, make materials on school safety and violence prevention available to anyone who can download them. A home page on the Web also enhances NEA's presence on the information highway, making it possible for more members to reach our information.

How can NEA members use the Web in their classrooms?
As a classroom tool, the Web is invaluable. Students researching any topic can call up photos of a current event even as it's unfolding or locate a video clip of a historic event, say the civil rights march on Washington.

Who can access the World Wide Web?
Anyone who's linked with a service—America Online is one example—that provides a gateway to the Internet.

When will NEA establish its presence on the Web?
NEA staffers are working on the Association's first web site right now. NEA is scheduled to announce its presence on the Web later this year.

WORKING FOR YOU

Innovation's Multi-Media Outreach

At NEA's National Center for Innovation, it isn't "business as usual" anymore. Not with the increasing availability of multimedia technology at hand and the skills and energy of dozens of staffers, including technology planning specialist Faye Northcutt (above, left) and *Teacher TV* program assistant Paula Chavez-Talley.

Northcutt is one of many staffers exploring the multitude of creative ways the Center can reach out to members.

"There's going to be a time when NEA members will receive information on learning, professional development, and assessment through video, CD-ROMs, even interactive discs," she explains. "Our goal is to incorporate sound, picture, motion, and video into our training, our conferences, even our materials for members.

"We want to make the learning process exciting for NEA members," Northcutt continues. "Statistics show that people comprehend more when presentations are lively, entertaining, and meaningful to their own personal experiences."

On the television front, Paula Chavez-Talley's also reaching out through technology.

"It's my job to set up and coordinate the filming of *Teacher TV* episodes," she explains. "That means everything from corresponding with the school, teachers, and district officials, to working with the staff of our co-producer, *The Learning Channel*, to set up the final shoot."

Chavez-Talley, who came to NEA from NEA-New Mexico one year ago, also publicizes the program through promotional materials she's designed herself.

"When educators on opposite sides of the country see that they have something in common, whether it's a classroom strategy or a social issue they're confronting, they no longer feel isolated," says Chavez-Talley. "*Teacher TV* becomes a bridge to common ground."

NEA ELECTIONS

Delegates to the 1996 NEA Representative Assembly, to be held July 2-5 in Washington, D.C., will elect a president, vice-president, and two Executive Committee members. All four officers will serve three-year terms, beginning September 1, 1996.

Nominations for all four positions must be mailed to the NEA Executive Office or filed in person on or before April 15, 1996. If mailed, the nominations must be postmarked no later than April 15.

Candidates for the four positions must have been NEA Active members for two years immediately preceding the election. Filing forms and election information, including the *Campaign Regulations for Candidates for NEA Office*, are available from the NEA Executive Office, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington DC 20036.

The *Campaign Regulations* booklet describes a number of NEA services for candidates available through the Executive Office.

The Representative Assembly may also need to elect at-large representatives of ethnic minorities, administrators, classroom teachers in higher education, and Active members employed in educational support positions pursuant to Article V, Section 1(c), (d), (e), and (f) of the Constitution. If such elections are necessary, the presidents and executive directors of state affiliates, the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, and the NEA Committee on Minority Affairs will be notified in June 1996. The April 15 deadline for nominations does not apply to elections to fill at-large positions on the NEA Board of Directors.

NEA ELECTORAL PROCESS

The 1996 NEA Representative Assembly will elect an NEA president for a three-year term beginning September 1, 1996.

Article IV, Section 4, of the NEA Constitution, Affirmative Action Procedure, requires the Association to notify all Association members about that provision and the electoral process prior to every presidential election. The language of Article IV, Section 4, is as follows:

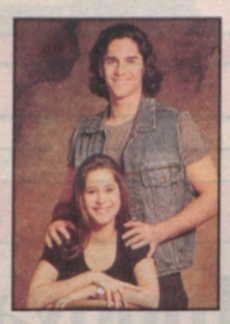
> By December 1 of each membership year immediately preceding the next membership year in which a presidential election is to be held (i.e., approximately 18 months prior to the date of the election), appropriate information about the office of President and the electoral process, including all relevant timelines, shall be sent to each of the ethnic-minority special interest groups identified in Bylaw 12; and
>
> During the membership year in which the aforesaid presidential election is to be held, a copy of this section of the Constitution, with an appropriate explanation as to its background and intent, shall be included in (a) an Association publication sent to all members by December 1 and (b) the material that is sent to the delegates to that year's Representative Assembly.
>
> If, after any period of eleven (11) consecutive membership years, a member of an ethnic-minority group has not served as President, the Association shall take such steps as may be legally permissible to elect a member of an ethnic-minority group.

RESOURCES

TV Tips

Fact or Fiction: Courtroom Myths—*Court TV, every Saturday throughout the month, 4 a.m. ET.* Do defendants often break down on the witness stand and admit their guilt? Are attorneys allowed to yell at witnesses? In this Law Day special, the network's anchors and reporters talk about their favorite myths and clear up some misconceptions.

Road to Infamy: The Countdown Years—*The History Channel, Thursday, December 7, 11 a.m.-noon, ET, 8-9 p.m. PT.* Tapping a wealth of newsreel and rare archival footage, this documentary follows the political, social, and cultural forces that exploded in the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.



Positive: A Film About AIDS—*ABC, Thursday, December 7, 4-5 p.m. ET.* In their roles as teenage lovers on "General Hospital," Kimberly McCullough and Michael Sutton play Robin and her boyfriend, Stone, a teen who gets AIDS. This documentary shows how the two actors prepare for their roles and experience the real-life drama of children and adults living with HIV and AIDS.

Lamb Chop's Special Chanukah—*PBS, Monday, December 11, 8-9 p.m. ET.* Shari Lewis, Lamb Chop, Hush Puppy, and Charlie Horse welcome some special guests to Shari's Chanukah party to enjoy the traditions, foods, songs, and stories of the holiday.

Kids 'N' Meteorology—*The Weather Channel, Sunday, December 17, 8 p.m. ET.* A look at basic meteorology that aims to strengthen kids' curiosity.

Peter and the Wolf—*ABC, December 17, 8-9 p.m. ET.* This production of a classic story combines animation with live-action footage and stars actors who span three generations.

"Not in Our Town"—*PBS, Sunday, December 17, 10:30 p.m. ET.* In 1993, the town of Billings, Montana was rocked by a series of hate activities that eventually turned violent. This documentary looks at the thousands of residents who responded with a show of support for their neighbors.

Shining Time Station Family Special: "Queen for a Day"—*PBS, Monday, December 18, 8 p.m. ET.* The gang at Shining Time Station learns how important it is to be yourself when members of the royal family accidentally get stranded at the train station.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a computerized clearinghouse for children's radio and television programming in Washington, D.C.

Ahead on *Teacher TV*

Looking for some proven classroom strategies? Then tune in to *Teacher TV*, the award-winning weekly magazine-style program coproduced by NEA and the Learning Channel. *Teacher TV* airs Sundays at 12:30 p.m. ET. Here's a list of topics set for upcoming episodes.

December 3: When Society's Problems Walk Through the Door
December 10: Why Is Change So Hard?
December 17: Authentic Materials
December 24: Higher Expectations: Foiling the Bell Curve
December 31: Teaching In and Through the Arts

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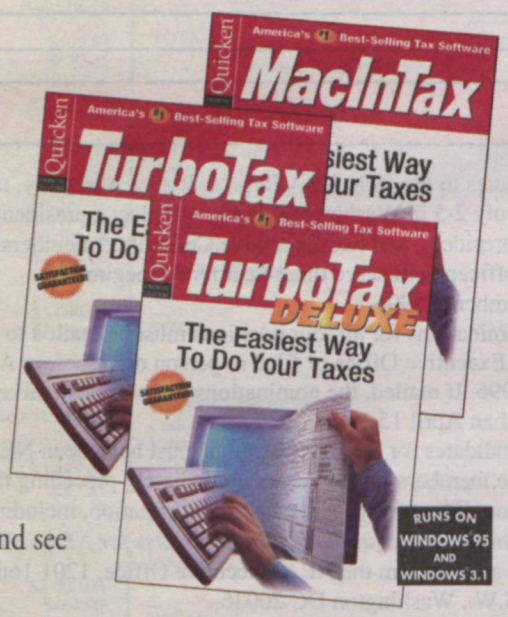

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Debate

Are Science Fairs Fair?

YES

Mary Stiverson, a 16-year classroom veteran, is a sixth grade teacher at Rosehill Elementary School in Omaha, Nebraska. An activist in the Omaha Education Association (OEA), Stiverson has served as chair of OEA's PAC board and elementary rep on the OEA board.

While some may feel that a school science fair is a dog-and-pony show, a public relations circus, or an opportunity for parents to demonstrate their proficiency in building models, I look upon it as a learning experience for my students.

Through the science fair, my students learn to ask questions of the world around them and to use a structured process to examine those questions.

They use math skills to prepare and present data, critical thinking skills to interpret the data, and communication skills to report on what they've done and what they've learned.

Science fairs offer an ideal way for non-traditional learners to demonstrate their mastery of key concepts and skills.

Some of my own low-achieving science students have prepared and exhibited outstanding projects, proving their scientific ability to all and raising their self-confidence. It's wonderful to see how this changes their whole concept of self—from "failure" to "star."

The secret to a successful fair lies in setting ground rules, preparing students well in advance, then guiding them through the process.

Our school science fair is held in the spring. Students in K-3 classes may present displays and class projects on a voluntary basis. Students in grades four through six are required to complete an investigation or experiment for the fair.

As my sixth graders prepare their projects, I monitor their progress according to a strict time line.

First, I ensure that the chosen project meets the criteria of being an experiment with controlled, manipulated, and responding variables—and that it's one that the student can carry through with a minimum of outside assistance.

During the preparation period, I meet two more times with each student to assess the project and progress made. I want to be assured that the student understands the purpose and method used to conduct the experiment.

At the same time, I get a clear picture of how well the student grasps the concepts of the scientific process—establishing variables, collecting data, and drawing reasonable conclusions.

Then I show students how to make a display board, complete with title, graphs, labels, and any other necessary explanations.

Because so much class time is spent preparing for the science fair, it counts for a substantial portion of my students' quarterly grade. But the grade is not dependent solely on the public exhibit.

Students know in advance that they will be graded on the use of the scientific process and their ability to define and discuss their projects.

In addition, students who don't want to exhibit their projects at the fair may choose to submit them to me alone for a grade. This eliminates the element of competition, which leads to one of the most common complaints about science fairs—"It's not the student's work. It's the parent's."

Since I hold students accountable for explaining every aspect of their projects, parents can't earn children's grades for them. But parents can get involved—and that's not all bad.

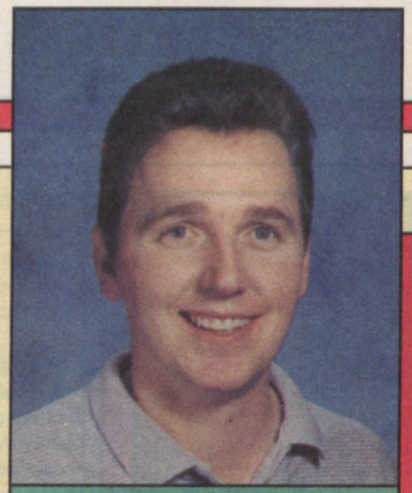
When mom or dad gets involved, it tells the student that education in general and science in particular are important. And the parental attention certainly boosts the child's self-esteem.

For students who are really motivated, participation in state and regional science fairs offers a great enrichment experience. At these fairs, my students are always amazed and intrigued by the variety of investigations presented. They can learn a lot just by looking around.

As the projects are being judged, usually by persons with expertise in the various science and technological disciplines, students are able to interact with the judges on a one-to-one basis. They get to talk with science professionals and see science as a viable career choice.

Finally, students—and their parents—feel a sense of pride in the child's participation, whether he or she wins a ribbon or not.

If my school had no science fair, I'd work to get one started. The fair gives students a chance to apply what they've learned and tells me more about a student's understanding of scientific concepts than any paper-and-pencil test.



NO

Blaine Paradise is a seventh grade language arts and ESL teacher at Roskruge Bilingual Magnet Middle School in Tucson, Arizona. He's a building rep for the Tucson Education Association and has been a delegate to the state and national Association annual meetings.

Awhile back my colleagues and I led a group of students to see the exhibits on display at the Southern Arizona Regional Science and Engineering Fair.

The purpose was to see what other middle school students were doing for science projects in the hope that ours would gain inspiration and ideas for the future.

But my initial excitement at seeing the hundreds of exhibits soon turned to dismay when I noticed the sheer range of the projects.

Some were displayed on simple cardboard panels with hand-drawn lettering describing experiments to determine which brand of chewing gum holds its flavor the longest or which catsup really pours the slowest.

At the other end of the spectrum—and the hall—stood what I can only describe as the Excalibur of student projects: an oak-veneered monolith, standing nine feet high, upon which was described in laser-printed glory an experiment involving nothing less than enormously complex DNA research.

Numerous 8" x 10" color photographs showed the youthful, white-coated, Einstein-like student in various poses of scientific inquiry.

Imagine which exhibit drew the most comments and discussion. Guess which exhibit discouraged many of my students from ever wanting to compete in future science fairs.

What is the purpose of science fairs? To encourage student interest in science? To spark kids' natural curiosity about their world and showcase their discoveries while using the scientific method?

Or to turn science into a petty competition among students, encouraging many to stretch the boundaries of what is reasonable in order to win cash, prizes, and prestige?

Consider the evidence. Some students with connections, and with the blessing of science fair organizers, gain access to professional assistance that's unavailable to the vast majority of entrants.

Project budgets for some students appear to be almost unlimited, while those of others are bare-bones at best.

The playing field isn't level, so the contest is unfair. The message it sends to millions of students is that scientific achievement is for an elite few.

It tells students that without significant parental, professional, and financial help, they have no chance of winning. Perhaps we're discouraging more kids from considering a future in science than we're encouraging.

How can we make science fairs more fair? By reining in those students who take full advantage of the lack of clear limitations and oversight, and by expanding opportunities for students who lack the resources to create competitive projects.

Science fair organizers should consider:

- ➤ limiting the use of scientific instruments and resources to those items routinely available in a typical American public school
- ➤ setting strict budget limits (an itemized list of expenditures should be attached to each display to prove compliance)
- ➤ setting clear guidelines on appropriate parental involvement
- ➤ recruiting community volunteers to help students with their projects
- ➤ involving *all* of a student's teachers (for example, language teachers could help with the writing, math teachers with graphs, art teachers with display set-up)
- ➤ requiring most of the work to be done at school in the presence of the science teacher
- ➤ setting stricter limits on the size of the displays and the materials used
- ➤ judging with a greater emphasis on presentation to ensure the student has gained scientific knowledge.

By limiting students in these ways, perhaps their imaginations will be set free.

As a public school teacher, it would be unacceptable for me to remain silent when obvious inequities exist that may have significant negative effects on my students' educational experiences.

If changes aren't made in the way these events are run, at least change their name. They may be about science, but they're just not fair.

Letters

REWARDS WORK

As adults, we appreciate incentives, monetary or otherwise. We feel students appreciate recognition for their hard work, too. So we agree with Elberta Ritchie that academic incentive programs work ("Should Kids Be Paid To Be Good?" Debate, November).

We teach at DeLong Middle School and are very enthusiastic about our school's "I've Improved" program. Over the past four years, the program has been very successful in motivating students to work harder.

When students improve academically, they're rewarded with a trip to a Milwaukee Bucks game, courtesy of the Bucks organization and several Eau Claire area businesses. Sure, the kids get to go to the game, but they also gain a sense of pride and self-accomplishment, which in turn builds their self-esteem.

We feel this extrinsic motivational tool has lead to the intrinsic motivation of our students.

Susan Kern
Sally Marth
Mary Pomerening
Kathy Robinson
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

SIGN IN, PLEASE

I'm very concerned about two separate suggestions to remove school signs that say: "All visitors must sign in at the office" (Cover story, Innovation, November). Those signs offer real protection to students and teachers.

Being a male elementary teacher, I've always been placed in the classroom farthest from the office. Because of my sex, I've been asked many times to assist other teachers in confrontations with students and adults who had no right to be on campus.

The signs give teachers the right to call the office when someone is roaming the campus. The signs give teachers the right to call the police. The signs allow teachers to point out to trouble makers that they are breaking the law just by standing on our campus.

I'm all for parent involvement, but I'm more concerned about my safety—and the safety of the children.

Robert Robey
San Jose, California

Posting signs requesting that all visitors report to the office is a safety measure for children and staff. After all, there may be non-custodial parents without visitation rights coming to kidnap their children. Or sick people walking into a classroom to say or do inappropriate things. In a school where I formerly taught, a man walked in a side door, escaped detection by any adult, and exposed himself in a classroom.

At my current school, we have all visitors report to the office, state their business, and then wear a name tag so everyone will know they are sanctioned.

There's a second purpose for the sign that's a bit more subtle—we need to protect ourselves from constant interruptions. We can't have parents just walking into classrooms to give their children lunch money or forgotten homework. To me, that says the business of teaching isn't all that important.

No one would ever think of interrupting doctors or lawyers when they're doing their jobs. Why, then, is it okay to have unnecessary interruptions to the important business of teaching children?

I think all sides of an issue need to be considered before making any statement—something you neglected to do when listing 10 ways to make your school unfriendly.

Karen Gronau
kgronau@umd5.umd.edu

GIRLS AND MATH

Your article on all-girl math classes at Anacapa Middle School (Human Rights, November) neglected to mention the impact of the classes on the students who don't take them.

I've taught science at Anacapa since fall 1994. Right now, I teach six class periods, which average 34 students each. Seventy-five of my students are girls, 126 are boys.

Girls who don't get scheduled into all-girls classes end up in classrooms where they're likely to be outnumbered by boys—in some cases, two to one. Due to scheduling difficulties, one class ended up with 33 boys.

I wonder if the Office of Civil Rights considered the equity implications for the girls who were left out of all-girl classes. What about the boys who could have benefited from learning alongside their female peers? How did they conclude that our co-ed math and science classes were discriminating in the first place? Does such data exist?

Obviously, I don't believe that Anacapa needs all-girls math and science classes. In co-ed classes, males and females bring their various interests, personalities, maturity levels, and strengths to be shared and developed. That's what public schools are all about—learning from and with one's peers, regardless of race, religion, or gender.

Brenda Tzipori
Ventura, California

TIRED OF TAXES

The people of Hillsborough County, Florida, just voted down a 1/2 cent sales tax for education, which was meant to replace lost federal and state funds. The amazing thing is that even teachers voted against it. People, including teachers, are tired of being taxed and getting no results.

We in the NEA need to find solutions to educational problems that don't require more and more money used more and more inefficiently.

A recent article, "Congress Declares War on Children" (National News, October), is a case in point. Many of us in the teaching field question the usefulness of all the special programs that are being defended. We want to know what would happen if, instead of spending all this money on special programs and the administration and paperwork that they require, we replaced the bureaucrats with teachers and reduced class sizes.

The public would like to know, too. It seems we're all about to find out.

Terry Larson
Seffner, Florida

TWO PARENTS

As someone who was involved in the adoption process, I disagree with a recent letter advocating support services for teen mothers ("No Cuts," October).

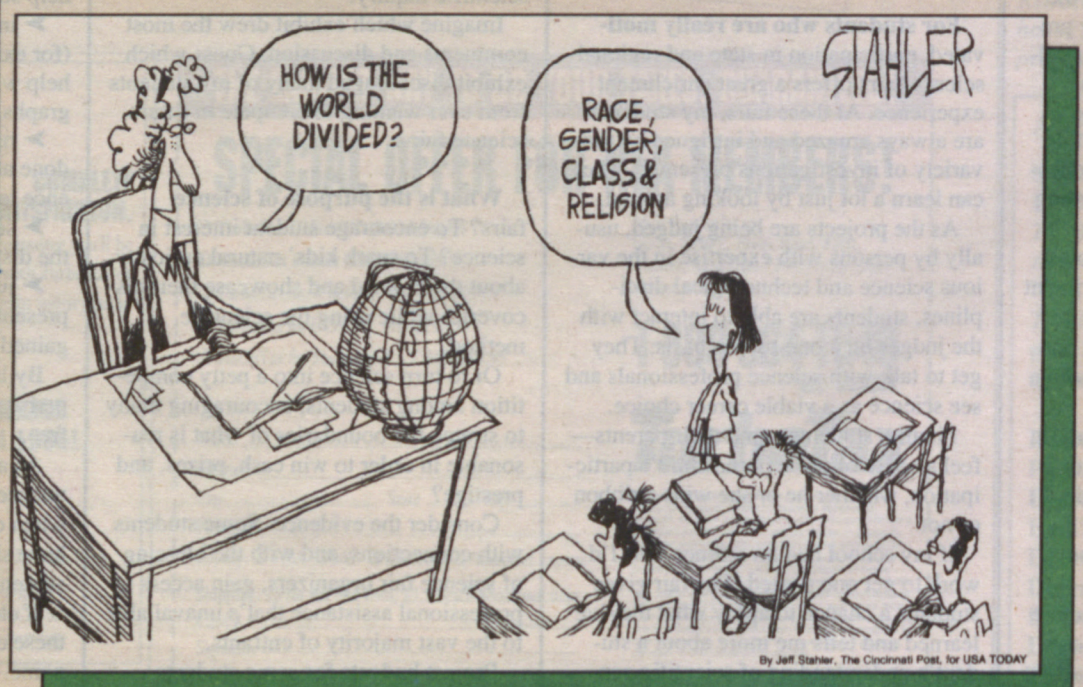
With two million married couples waiting to adopt a child, there's no reason for society to encourage teenage girls to try to raise babies on their own. Newspapers large and small continuously run ads from married, mature, financially sound couples desperate to adopt.

Children raised in fatherless homes are denied something that no government check or well-meaning social program can supply. The result has been the kind of societal breakdown that's all too common these days.

It's time to return to the concept that children deserve both a mother and a father.

If we see more two-parent families, we'll see less violence, gang influence, drug abuse, child abuse, and other social problems.

Dan Moeller
Freeport, Illinois



FOR PROFITS

A recent letter complains that *NEA Today* compromises its integrity by allowing McDonald's —whose "bottom line is profit"—to advertise ("Contradictions," October). Another article criticizes Alternative Public Schools, Inc. ostensibly because they are "a profit-making firm" (Grassroots).

When did profit become a bad thing? Our economy has three major organizational sectors: 1) private, for-profit, 2) private, non-profit, and 3) public. It's my observation that virtually 100 percent of the tangible wealth created in this country is generated by the private, for-profit sector.

Private, non-profits, and public entities feed off the wealth that is created by others. Does this fact allow those who do not produce wealth to claim moral superiority? I don't think so.

The people who work or invest in the private, for-profit sector of our economy create sufficient surplus wealth to support inordinately large public and private, non-profit sectors with good living standards for all. For this, I'm grateful.

Jim Knight
Escanaba, Michigan

OBSCENE

As an English teacher, I read with interest "Fighting Words?" (Cover Story, October). I found the article quite informative and interesting, but the question (and anthropologist Marcylena Morgan's answer) on the subject of students' obscene t-shirts really concerned me.

Morgan says it's hard to tell a student to take off an offensive shirt. I say why would a school board's dress policy allow offensive t-shirts in the first place?

There are several possibilities that would help to solve the problem. The student can turn the shirt inside out, trade for a plain white shirt in the dean's office, or have a parent bring another shirt to school.

And yes, there should be disciplinary action attached to all three so the student will become clear on what's appropriate to wear to school.

Jean Chambers
Plano, Texas

BIG ZERO

I nominate Arizona Governor Fyfe Symington for one of your "zeroes." He proposes disbanding the Department of Education, saying anyone with a BA can teach. He declared a week honoring home study, while at the same time, slashing education monies from the budget. And don't forget, he ran for office promising to build more

LETTER FROM: *Bakersfield, California*

Dick and Jane—And Me

Here in Bakersfield—and for that matter, throughout California—primary grade teachers are struggling with changes in the way we teach kids to read. As you might expect, this has caused a great stir in the education community, and I'm one of a very few teachers right in the middle of it. Let me explain.

Last year, when California's new superintendent, Delaine Eastin, took office, she appointed teachers to two task forces to revise failing approaches to reading and math instruction. I was one of 27 people appointed to the California Reading Task Force.

It was a dream come true. After 30 years of teaching, I finally got a chance to influence how reading is taught in this state and, given California's buying power in the textbook market, in the nation as well.

My motivation came from misgivings I'd had for years about the way we'd been told to teach reading in the state. In 1987, whole language was chosen as the only approach to teaching reading here. Phonics, spelling, and a whole host of other reading skills were purposely left out.

Research popular at that time showed that children learned to read much like they learned to talk. Children learn to talk when they are talked to; thus children learn to read when they are read to.

Districts implemented the new approach to varying degrees, but the state was clear—in its text selection, program evaluations, assessment, and teacher training—that the "new" approach was the way to success. Some districts actually removed the phonics based readers from teachers' shelves, and most districts eliminated spelling and language books.

As time passed, districts began to recognize the shortfalls of the reading framework and began to purchase materials to shore up weak areas. Funds for these supplemental materials were hard to come by in these economic times. So districts looked to creative fundraising—like spaghetti feeds—to pay for spelling books. And, of course, teachers supplemented out of their own pockets.

Programs to work on basics were added in a hodgepodge of directions. One district used one approach while another district tried something else, and the wheel was continually reinvented.

The task force—a truly representative group of educators, community leaders, parents, and bureaucrats—convened last year. It didn't take long for us to agree to replace the old framework with one that kept the rich literature but added basic reading skills.

Our report, released in September, calls for immediate changes in the teaching of reading. A few highlights:

➤ The report recognizes the need for a comprehensive, balanced approach to reading. It continues to encourage great literature through writing, reading, and oral language, but it adds basic reading skills. "Drill and kill" is no solution to the teaching of reading—but neither is ignoring phonics.

Superintendent Eastin has already directed textbook editors who want to sell books in California next year to coordinate the full range of materials in one program. This includes texts with rich subject matter, phonics, spelling, language, and whatever else is needed. Thus a child in need and a child rich in readiness can progress along an upward continuum toward reading with success and pleasure.

➤ The report recognizes reading as the center of education. It suggests that other subjects and time-consuming projects be delayed to make time to teach reading.

➤ While the goal is to have each child reading by third grade, the report stresses that every teacher must be prepared to teach reading regardless of grade or subject. It also states that the most qualified teachers should teach the children with the biggest reading problems, and that all certificated personnel should be teaching reading during a specific time each day.

➤ The report states that flexible grouping according to academic achievement is a viable solution to the large class size problem that exists in California. And it states that there must be ongoing diagnostic testing by classroom teachers so that problems are caught and corrected early.

➤ To help children learn to read, the report says kids must have easy access to a lot of books. One possible solution: moving libraries from room to room. In addition, the report calls for more books to be available at each level of reading so students can find success at each stage of their growth.

➤ The report calls for in-service training for teachers who haven't been trained to implement this balanced approach. For those still in school, teacher training institutions have been asked to include more specifics on how to teach reading.

State Superintendent Eastin stands behind these recommendations and is now working to implement them.

Now I know lots of people in California will bury their heads and say they have nothing to change, but I challenge them to evaluate their reading program based on the report. I believe it contains all the elements needed to raise reading scores in California—and perhaps the nation.

Diana Garchow is a resource teacher at Highland Elementary School and a member of the Standard Teachers Association.

juvenile detention centers. If Symington ran his business the same way he runs this state, it's easy to see why he ended up in bankruptcy!

Ingrid Rose
Tucson, Arizona

WHAT'S LOST

Perhaps we need a moment of silence (Debate, September) to remember what was lost when we stopped reading the Bible, leading the Lord's Prayer, and saluting the flag at the start of each day.

We lost public speaking experience. I recall my knocking knees as I stood before the classroom once a month leading the "opening exercises" and wondering if my voice would falter. That surely helped me in later years when I had to speak before groups.

We lost inspirational stories that tie us to the culture and the Bible. Perhaps today, readings could be adapted to accommodate and respect different religions and cultures—and maybe we could even learn about each other.

We lost respect for rules for living. Today's students aren't given an opportunity to know about the history, culture, rules, or stories from religious writings—and it's a bit like navigating without a chart or map.

We lost much more than prayer, I think. We lost our way, and need some tools (and rules) to find ourselves.

Vera Dunmire
Summerland Key, Florida

BACK TO BASICS

Since I started teaching in 1977, I've seen many changes. I've seen overall education funding decrease, while funding is increased for counseling of all sorts, free food programs, parenting classes, etc. I've seen a true "dumbing down" of curriculum in an attempt to pass all students and to keep them entertained and happy.

The results of these changes are parents and students with little sense (or need) of responsibility, and students who can't spell, write, read, or do basic arithmetic.

I suggest educational "unreform," a true return to the basics. Return responsibility for feeding and health care to the parents, require students to be proficient in all the basics, and make civil behavior a condition of attending school.

The current mentality of throwing educational programs at social ills is like packing sand down a rat hole. It certainly gives you a sense of doing something to solve the problem, but it has little chance of success. We need to get out of the social repair business and return to education.

Gary Wilson
Perryville, Maryland

APPLES VS. ORANGES

Comparing the answers of a preschool teacher and a high school teacher to the question "Should Teachers Live Where They Teach?" (Debate, October) is ridiculous.

Unless you're employed at McMartin, daily events at a preschool attract little or no attention. In a high school, everything attracts attention.

When I began my career, I looked at houses in the community of my school. But I was a teacher—I couldn't afford to buy a house in suburban Los Angeles County. That turned out to be a lucky break.

Because I lived in neighboring Orange County throughout my entire teaching career, I was free to practice all of the rights that every citizen has, including running for the local school board, which I did in 1977. Had I lived in the district where I teach, state law would have prohibited my serving on the board that employs me.

The answer to the debate question is this: Different strokes for different folks. Let's use the pages of our professional magazine for something a little more significant.

Bill Raabe
Huntington Beach, California

GREAT GUNS

I was gratified by the positive coverage given to Civil War reenactors and living history enthusiasts (People, October). I've demonstrated the skills, artifacts, and weapons of the French and Indian Wars, the Revolution, and the fur trade era at many schools and have seen how they can excite youngsters.

Under many laws proposed or enacted that prohibit firearms and edged weapons from school zones, such demonstrations become impossible. Any such laws should be drafted with enough care and foresight to permit special presentations by qualified people.

Otherwise, many students will not experience the "hook" that makes history accessible, immediate, and interesting for life.

Eric Bye
Chester, Vermont

Let's Talk!

Letters are edited for length and clarity. Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

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